The Right

METHOD

For a settled

PEACE

Of Conscience, and Spiritual

COMFORT.

In 32 DIRECTIONS.

Written for the use of a troubled friend: and now published

By *Richard Baxter*,

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1 John 4.16. *God is Love.*

Luke 14.17. Mat. 22.4. *Come, for all things are now Ready.*

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MAT. 11.28.

COme unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest: *Take my* Yoke *upon you, and* Learn *of me: for I am* meek *and* Lowly *in heart, and ye shall finde* Rest *unto your ſouls: For my* Yoke *is eaſie, and my burthen is light.*

GAL. 5.17.

For the fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh; and theſe are contrary the one to the other, ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

ROM. 6.16.

Know ye not that to whom ye Yield *your ſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey? whether of ſin unto Death, or of* Obedience *unto* Righteouſneſs?

ROM. 13.14.

Make not proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfill the luſts thereof.

ROM. 8.13.

For if ye Live after the fleſh, ye ſhall dye: But if ye through the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the Body, ye ſhall live.

2 Pet. 2.19.

While they promise them Liberty, *they themselves are the Servants of Corruption: for of whom a man is* overcome, *of the same is he brought in bondage.*

Ezek. 33.10,11.

Thus you speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? *Say unto them,* As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye dye, O house of Israel?

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2 Cor. 2.20.

Now then, we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christs stead, be reconciled to God.

Psal. 37.3,4.

Trust in the Lord, and do good, &c. Delight thy self also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the Desires of thine heart.

Sound Doctrine makes a sound Judgement, a sound Heart, a sound Conversation, and a sound Conscience.

To

To my much valued, beloved, and honored friends, Col. *John Bridges*, with Mr^s *Margaret Bridges* his Wife, and Mr. *Thomas Foley*, with Mr^s *Anne Foley* his Wife.

Though in publishing our Writings, we intend them for the good of all; yet custom (not without reason) doth teach us, sometimes to direct them more especially to some. Though one only had the original interest in these papers, yet do I now direct them to you all, as not knowing how in this to separate you. You dwell together in my Estimation and Affection: One of you a Member of the

the Church, which I must Teach; and legally the Patron of its Maintenance and Minister: The other, a special branch of that family, which I was first indebted to in this County. You lately joyned in presenting to the Parliament, the Petition of this County for the Gospel and a faithful Ministry. When I only told you of my intention, of sending some poor Scholars to the University, you freely and joyntly offered your considerable Annual allowance thereto, and that for the continuance of my life, or their necessities there. I will tell the world of this, whether you will or no: not for your applause, but for their imitation; and the shame of many of far greater estates, that will not be drawn to do the like. The season somewhat aggravates the Goodness of your Works. When Satan hath a design to burn up those Nurseries, you are watering Gods plants: when the greedy mouth of Sacriledge is gaping for their Maintenance, you are voluntarily add-

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ing for the supply of its defect. Who knows how many souls they may win to Christ (if God shall send them forth into his harvest) whom you have thus assisted? and what an addition to your comfort this may be? When the Gospel is so undermined, and the Ministry so maligned, and their maintenance so envied, you have, as the mouth of this County, appeared for them all. What God will yet do with us, we cannot tell; but if he will continue his Gospel to us, you may have the greater comfort in it; If he will remove it, and forsake a proud unworthy false hearted People; yet may you have the comfort of your sincere endeavors: you (with the rest that sincerely furthered it) may escape the gnawings of Conscience, and the publique curse and reproach, which the Historie of this age may fasten upon them, who after all their Engagements in blood and Covenants, would either in ignorant fury, or malicious subtilty, or base temporizing cowardize, oppugn or

undermine the Gospel, or in perfidious silence, look on, whilst it's destroyed. But because it is not the work of a flatterer, that I am doing, but of a friend; I must second these commendations with some caution and counsel; and tell your selves of your danger and duty, as I tell others of your exemplary Deeds. Truly the sad experiences of these times, have much abased my confidence in man, and caused me to have lower thoughts of the best, then sometime I have had. I confess I look on man, as such a distempered, slippery and unconstant thing, and of such a natural mutability of Apprehensions and Affections, that as I shall never more call any man on earth, My friend, but with a supposition that he may possibly become mine enemie; So I shall never be so confident of any mans Fidelity to Christ, as not withal to suspect that he may possibly forsake him: nor shall I boast of any mans service for the Gospel, but with a jealousie that he may

be

es drawn to do as much against it though God who knows the heart, and knows his own decrees, may know its sincerity, and foreknow his perseverance.) Let me therefore remember you, that had you expended your whole estates, and the blood of your hearts for Christ and his Gospel, he will not take himself beholden to you. He oweth you no Thanks for your deepest engagements, highest adventures, greatest cost, or utmost endeavours. You are sure beforehand that you shall be no losers by him: your seeming hazards increase your security: Your losses are your gain; your giving is your receiving; your expences are your revenues: Christ returns the largest usury. The more you do and suffer for him, the more you are beholden to him. I must also remember you, that you may possibly live to see the day, when it will cost you dearer to shew your selves faithful to the Gospel, Ordinances and Ministers of Christ, then now it doth: and

that

that many have shrunk in greater tryals, that past through better with resolution and honor. Your defection at the last, would be the loss of all your works and hopes. *If any man draw back*, Christ saith, *his soul shall have no pleasure in him.* Even those that have endured the great fight of Affliction, being reproached and made a gazing-stock, and that have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, in assurance of a better and enduring substance, have yet need to be warned that they cast not away their confidence, and draw not back to perdition, and lose not the Reward for want of Patience and Perseverance, *Heb.* 10. 22. to the end. That you may escape this danger, and be happy for ever, take this advice. 1. Look carefully to the sincerity of your hearts, in their Covenant-closure with Christ. See that you take him with the happiness he hath promised for your *All*. Take heed of looking after another felicity, or cherishing other Hopes, or esteeming

ing too highly any thing below. Be jealous, and very jealous, leſt your hearts ſhould cloſe deceitfully with Chriſt, maintaining any ſecret Reſerve for your bodily ſafety: either reſolving not to follow him, or not reſolving to follow him through the moſt deſolate diſtreſſed condition that he ſhall lead you in. Count what it may coſt you to get the Crown; ſtudy well his precepts of Mortification and Self-denyal. There is no true hopes of the Glory to come, if you cannot caſt overboard all worldly hopes, when the ſtorm is ſuch that you muſt hazard the one. O how many have thought that Chriſt was moſt dear to them, and that the hopes of heaven were their chiefeſt hopes, who have left Chriſt, though with ſorrow, when he bid them let go all? 2. Every day renew your apprehenſions of the Truth and Worth of the Promiſed Felicity; and of the Deluſory Vanity of all things here below: Let not Heaven loſe with you its Attractive force, through your

forgetfulneſs or unbelief. He is the beſt Chriſtian, that knows beſt why he is a Chriſtian; and he will moſt faithfully ſeek and ſuffer, that beſt knows for what he doth it. Value not Wealth and Honor above that rate which the wiſeſt and beſt experienced have put upon them: and allow them no more of your affections then they deſerve. A mean wit may eaſily diſcover their emptineſs. Look on all preſent actions and conditions with a remembrance of their end. Deſire not a ſhare in their proſperity, who muſt pay as dear for it as the loſs of their ſouls: Be not ambitious of that honor which muſt end in Confuſion; nor of the Favor of thoſe that God will call enemies. How ſpeedily will they come down, and be levelled in the duſt, and be laid in the chains of darkneſs, that now ſeem ſo happy to the pur-blinde world, that cannot ſee the things to come? Fear not that man that muſt ſhortly tremble before that God whom all muſt fear. 3. Be more

ſolicitous

ſolicitous for the ſecuring of your Conſciences and Salvation, then of your honors or eſtates: In every thing that you are put upon, conſult firſt with God and Conſcience; and not with fleſh and blood. It is your daily and moſt ſerious care and watchfulneſs that is requiſite to maintain your integrity; and not a few careleſs thoughts or purpoſes, conjunct with a minding of earthly things. 4 Deal faithfully with every truth which you receive. Take heed of ſubjecting it to carnal intereſts: If once you have affections that can maſter your Underſtandings, you are loſt, and know it not. For when you have a Reſolution to caſt off any duty, you will firſt Believe it is no duty: and when you muſt change your judgement for carnal advantages, you will make the change ſeem reaſonable and right: and evil ſhall be proved good when you have a minde to follow it. 5. Make Goſpel-Truths your own, by daily humble ſtudies, ariſing to ſuch a ſoundneſs of Judgement, that

you may not need to take too much upon truſt; leſt if your guides ſhould miſcarry, you miſcarry with them. Deliver not up your underſtanding in Captivity to any. 6. Yet do not over-value your own Underſtandings. This Pride hath done that in Church and State, which all diſcerning men are lamenting. They that know but little, ſee not what they want, as well as what they have; nor that imperfection in their knowledge which ſhould humble them, nor that difficulty in things, which ſhould make them diligent and modeſt. 7. Apprehend the neceſſity and Uſefulneſs of Chriſts Officers, Order and Ordinances for the proſperity of his Church: Paſtors muſt guide you, though not ſeduce you, or lead you blindefold. But chooſe (if you may) ſuch as are judicious, and not ignorant, not raſh but ſober, not formal but ſerious and ſpiritual, not of carnal but heavenly converſations; eſpecially avoid them that divide and follow parties, and ſeek to draw Diſciples to them-

themſelves,& can ſacrifice the *Churches* Unity and Peace to their proud humors or carnal intereſts. Watch carefully that no weakneſſes of the Miniſter do draw you to a diſ-eſteem of the Ordinances of God: nor any of the ſad miſcarriages of Profeſſors ſhould cauſe you to ſet leſs by Truth or Godlineſs. Wrong not Chriſt more, becauſe other men have ſo wronged him. Quarrel more with your own unfitneſs and unworthineſs in Ordinances, then with other mens. It is the frame of your own heart that doth more to help or hinder your Comforts, then the quality of thoſe you joyn with. To theſe few Directions added to the reſt in this Book, I ſhall ſubjoyn my hearty Prayers, that you may receive from that Goſpel and Miniſtry which you have owned, ſuch ſtability in the faith, ſuch victory over the fleſh and the world, ſuch apprehenſions of the Love of God in Chriſt, ſuch direction in every ſtrait and duty, that you

Live uprightly, Dye peaceably, and Raign Gloriously. *Amen.*

May 9.
1653.

Your servant in the Faith and Gospel of Christ.

Rich. Baxter.

To

To the Poor in Spirit.

MY dearly Beloved Fellow-Christians, whose souls are taken up with the careful thoughts of attaining and maintaining Peace with God: who are vile in your own eyes, and value the Blood and Spirit and Word of your Redeemer, and the Hope of the Saints in their approaching Blessedness, before all the Pomp and Vanities of this world, and Resolve to give up your selves to his Conduct, who is become the Author of Eternal Salvation to all them that obey him: For You do I Publish these following Directions: and to You it is that I direct this Preface. The onely Glorious and Infinite God, who made the Worlds,

and upholdeth them by his Word, who is attended with Millions of his Glorious Angels, and Praised continually by his Heavenly hosts: who pulleth down the Mighty from their seats, and scattereth the Proud in the Imaginations of their hearts, and maketh his Enemies lick the dust: to whom the Kings and Conquerors of the Earth are as the sillieſt worms, and the whole world is Nothing, and lighter then Vanity, which he will shortly turn into flames before your eyes: This God hath sent me to you, with that Joyful Message, which needs no more but your believing entertainment, to make it sufficient to raise you from the dust, and banish those terrours and troubles from your hearts, and help you to live like the Sons of God. He commandeth me to tell you, that he takes notice of your sorrows: he stands by when you see him not and say He hath forsaken you: he minds you with greateſt tenderneſs when you say He hath forgotten you: He numbreth your sighs: he bottles up your tears: the groans of your hearts do reach his own. He takes

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it unkindly, that you are so suspicious of him: and that all that he hath done for you in the work of Redemption, and all the gracious workings of his Spirit on your souls, and all your own peculiar experiences of his Goodness, can raise you to no higher apprehensions of his Love! Shall not Love be acknowledged to be Love, when its grown to a Miracle? when it surpasseth Comprehension! Must the Lord set up Love and Mercy in the work of Redemption, to be equally admired with his Omnipotency manifested in the Creation? and call forth the World to this sweet imployment, that in Secret and in Publick it might be the business of our lives? and yet shall it be so overlookt or questioned, as if you lived without Love and Mercy in the World? Providence doth its part, by heaping up Mountains of daily Mercies, and these it sets before your eyes: The Gospel hath eminently done its part by clear describing them, and fully assuring them: and this is proclaimed frequently in your ears: And yet is there so little in your hearts and mouths? Do you see,

and hear, and feel, and taste Mercy and Love? do you Live wholly on it? and yet do you still doubt of it? and think so meanly of it, and so hardly acknowledge it? God takes not this well: but yet he considereth your frailty, and takes you not at the worst. He knows that flesh will play its part, and the Remnants of Corruption will not be idle: and the Serpent will be suggesting false thoughts of God, and will be still striving most to obscure that part of his Glory which is deareſt to him, and especially which is most conjoyned with the Happiness of Man. He knows also, that sin will breed sorrows and fears: and that mans Understanding is shallow, and all his Conceivings of God are exceeding low: and that we are so far from God as Creatures, and so much further as sinners, and especially as Conscious of the abuse of his Grace, that there must needs follow such a strangeness, as will damp and dull our apprehensions of his Love: and such an abatement of our Confidence, as will make us draw back, and look at God afar off. Seeing therefore that at this distance

no full apprehensions of Love can be expected: It is the Pleasure of our Redeemer shortly to Return, with ten thousands of his Saints, with the noble Army of his Martyrs, and the attendance of his Angels: and to give you such a Convincing Demonstration of his Love, as shall leave no room for one more Doubt. Your Comforts are now but a Taste, they shall be then a Feast: They are now but Intermittent, they shall be then Continual. How soon now do your Conquered fears return? and what an unconstancy and unevenness is there in our Peace? But then our Peace must needs be Perfect and Permanent, when we shall please God and Enjoy him in Perfection to Perpetuity. Certainly, Christians, your Comforts should be now more abundant, but that they are not ripe: It is that, and not this; that is your harvest: I have told you in another Book the mistake and danger of expecting too much here, and the Necessity of Looking and Longing for that Rest, if we will have Peace indeed! But, alas, how hard is this lesson learned? Unbelievers would

have

have Happineſs: but how fain would they have it in the Creature, rather then in God! Believers would rather have their Happineſs in God then in the Creature: But how fain would they have it without Dying? And no wonder: for when Sin brought in Death, even Grace it ſelf cannot Love it, though it may ſubmit to it: But though Churliſh Death do ſtand in our way, why look we not at the Souls admittance into Reſt! and the Bodies Reſurrection that muſt ſhortly follow? Doubtleſs that Faith by which we are Juſtified and Saved, as it ſits down on the word of Truth as the preſent ground of its confident repoſe, ſo doth it thence look with one eye backward on the Croſs, and with the other forward on the Crown: And if we well obſerve the Scripture Deſcriptions of that Faith, we ſhall find them as frequently magnifying it, and deſcribing it from the latter as from the former. As it is the duty and glory of faith to look back with Thankful Acknowledgement to a Crucified Chriſt, and his payment of our Ranſome: ſo is it the Duty and Glory of

that same Justifying Saving Faith to Look forward with Desire and Hope to the Return of King Jesus, and the Glorious Celebration of the Marriage of the Lamb, and the Sentencial Justification, and the Glorification of his Saints: To Believe these things unfeignedly which we never saw, (nor ever spoke with man that did see) and to Hope for them so Really as to let go all present forbidden pleasures, and all worldly hopes and seeming happiness, rather then to hazard the loss of them: this is an eminent part of that Faith by which the Just do live, and which the Scripture doth own as Justifying and Saving: (For it never distinguisheth between Justifying Faith and Saving Faith, as to their nature.) It is therefore a great mistake of some to look onely at that one eye of Justifying Faith which looks back upon the Cross, and a great mistake of them on the other hand that look onely at that eye of it which beholds the Crown: Both Christ Crucified, and Christ Interceding, and Christ Returning to Justifie and Glorifie, are the objects

objects even of Justifying Saving Faith, most strictly so called. The Scripture oft expresseth the one onely: but then it still implyeth the other. The Socinians erroniously therefore from Heb. 11. *(where the Examples and Elogies of Faith are set forth) do exclude Christ Crucified, or the respect to his Satisfaction, from Justifying Faith, and place it in a meer Expectation of Glory: and others do as ungroundedly affirm, that it is not the Justifying Act of Faith which* Heb. 11. *describeth; because they find not the Cross of Christ there mentioned. For as Believing in Christs Blood Comprehendeth the End, even the Expectation of Remission and Glory merited by that blood: so the Believing of that Glory doth always imply that we Believe and Expect it as the fruit of Christs Ransome. It is for health and life that we Accept and Trust upon our Physician: And it is for Justification and Salvation that we Accept and Trust on Christ. The Salvation of our Souls is the End of our Faith. They that question whether we may Believe and Obey for our*

own Salvation, do question whether we may go to the Physician, and follow his advice for Health and Life. Why then do you that are Believers, so much forget the End of your Faith? and that for which it is that you Believe? Believing in Christ for present Mercies onely, be they temporal or spiritual, is not the true Believing. They are dangerously mistaken that think the thoughts of Heaven to be so accidental to the nature and work of Faith, as that they tend onely to our Comfort, and are not necessary to Salvation it self. It is upon your apprehensions and expectations of that unseen felicity that both your Peace and Safety do depend. How contrary therefore is it to the nature of a Believer, to forget the Place of his Rest and Consolation! and to Look for so much of these from Creatures, in this our present Pilgrimage and Prison, as, alas, too commonly we do! Thus do we kill our Comforts, and then complain for want of them. How should you have any Life or Constancy of Consolations, that are so seldom, so slight, so unbelieving and

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so heartless in your thoughts of Heaven! You know what a folly it is to expect any Peace, which shall not come from Christ as the Fountain: And you must learn as well to understand what a folly it is to expect any solid Joys, or stable Peace, which is not fetcht from Heaven, as from the End. O that Christians were careful to live with one eye still on Christ Crucified, and with the other on Christ coming in Glory! If the Everlasting Joys were more in your believing thoughts, Spiritual Joys would more abound at present in your hearts. It's no more wonder that you are Comfortless when Heaven is forgotten, or doubtingly remembred, then that you are faint when you eat not, or cold when you stir not, or when you have not fire or clothes.

But when Christians do not onely let fall their expectations of the things Unseen, but also heighten their expectations from the Creature: then do they most infallibly prepare for their fears, and troubles, and estrangedness from God, and with both hands draw calamities on their souls.

ſouls. Who ever meets with a diſtreſſed complaining ſoul, where one or both of theſe is not apparent? their Low expectations from God hereafter, or their high expectations from the Creature now? What doth keep us under ſuch trouble and diſquietneſs, but that we will not Expect what God hath Promiſed, or we will needs Expect what he Promiſed not? And then we complain when we miſs of thoſe Expectations which we fooliſhly and unfoundedly raiſed to our ſelves! We are grieved for Croſſes, for Loſſes, for wrongs from our Enemies, for unkind or unfaithful dealings of our Friends, for ſickneſs, for contempt and diſ-eſteem in the World! But who bid you look for any better? Was it Proſperity, and Riches, and Credit, and Friends, that God called you to Believe for? or that you became Chriſtians for, or that you had an abſolute promiſe of in the Word? If you will make Promiſes to your ſelf, and then your own Promiſes deceive you, whom ſhould you blame for that? Nay do we not, as it were, neceſſitate God hereby, to embitter

all

all our Comforts below, and to make every Creature as a Scorpion to us, because we will needs make them our petty Deities? We have less Comfort in them then else we might have, because we must needs have more then we should have. You might have more faithfulness from your Friends, more Reputation in the World, more sweetness in all your present enjoyments, if you lookt for Less. Why is it that you can scarce name a Creature near you, that is not a scourge to you, but because you can scarce name one that is not your Idol? or, at least, which you do not expect more from, then you ought? Nay (which is one of the saddest Considerations of this kind that can be imagined) God is fain to scourge us most even by the highest Professors of Religion, because we have most Idolized them, and had such excessive expectations from them. One would have thought it next to an impossibility, that such men, and so many of them, could ever have been drawn to do that against the Church, against that Gospel-Ministry, and Ordinances of God (which once seemed

dearer to them then their lives) which ath since been done, and which yet we ear! But a believing eye can discern he reason of this sad providence (in art:) Never men were more Idolized: nd therefore no wonder if we were never o afflicted by any. Alas, when will we earn by Scripture and Providence so to now God and the Creature, as to look for More from him, and less from them! We ave looked for Wonders from Scotland, *nd what is come of it? We looked that War should have even satisfied our de- ires, and when it had removed all visible mpediments, we thought we should have ad such a glorious Reformation as the World never knew! And now behold, a Babel, and a mangled Deformation! What high Expectations had we from an Assembly! what Expectations from a Parliament! and where are they now! O hear the Word of the Lord, ye low-spirited People!* [*Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Isa. 2. 22.] [*Cursed be the man that trusteth in man,*

and

and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: For he shall be like the Heath in the Desart, and shall not see when Good cometh. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose Hope the Lord is: For he shall be as a Tree planted by the Waters, &c. Jer. 17. 5, 6, 7, 8.] [*Surely men of Low degree are Vanity, and men of High degree are a Lye: to be laid in the ballance they are altogether lighter then Vanity,* Psal. 62. 9.] *Let me warn you all, Christians, for the time to come, Take the Creature as a Creature: remember its frailty: look for no more from it then its part: If you have the neareſt, deareſt, godly friends, expect to feel the sting of their Corruptions, as well as to tast the sweetness of their Grace: And they must expect the like from you.*

If you ask me why I speak so much of these things here? It is, 1. *Because I find that much of the trouble of ordinary Christians comes from their Crosses in the Creature, and the frustration of these their sinful Expectations.* 2. *And because*

have said so little of it in the following Directions, they being intended for the cure of another kind of Trouble: therefore I have said this much here of this.

Having premised this advice, I take my self bound to adde one thing more: that is, An Apologie for the Publication of this Imperfect Piece: whether just or insufficient, other men must judge. I confess I am so apprehensive of the Luxuriant Fertility, or Licenciousness of the Press of late, as being a design of the Enemy to bury and overwhelm in a croud those Judicious, Pious, Excellent Writings that before were so commonly read by the People, that I think few men should now print without an Apologie: much less such as I; who hath more lamented this inundation of impertinencies! or more accused the Ignorance and Pride of others that must needs disgorge themselves of all their Crudities, as if they were such precious Conceptions, proceeding from the Holy Ghost, that the World might not, without very great injury, be deprived of: and it were pity that all men should

not

be made partakers of them? And how come I to go on in the same fault my self? Truly I have no Excuse or Argument but those of the Times, Necessity and Providence: *which how far they may Justifie me, I must leave to the Judge. Being in company with a troubled complaining Friend, I perceived that it must be some standing Counsel which might be frequently perused, that must satisfactorily answer the Complaints that I heard, and not a transient Speech, which would quickly slip away: Being therefore obliged as a Pastor, and as a Friend, and as a Christian, to tender my best assistance for relief, I was suddenly (in the moment of speaking) moved to promise one sheet of Paper, which might be useful to that End. Which promise when I attempted to perform, the one sheet lengthened to thirty, and my one daies (intended) work was drawn out to a just month. I went on far before I had the least thought to let any eye behold it, except the Party for whom I wrote it: But at last I perceived an impossibility of contracting, and I was*

presently

resently possessed with confident appre-
ensions, that a Copy of those Directions
ight be useful to many other of my poor
Neighbours and Friends that needed them
s much: Upon which apprehension I
resently permitted my Pen to run more
t large, and to deviate from the
ase of the Party that I wrote for: and
o take in the common case of most troubled
doubting souls. By that time I had finished
t, I received Letters from several parts,
from Learned and Judicious Divines,
importuning me to print more (having
nderstood my Intentions to desist, as
having done too much already, even at
first:) I confess I was not much moved by
their Importunity, till they seconded it
with their Arguments: whereof one was,
The Experience of the success of former
Writings, which might assure me it was
not displeasing to God. I had many that
urged me: I had no one but my self to
draw me back. I apprehended that a writ-
ing of this nature might be useful to the
many weak perplexed Christians through
the Land. Two reasons did at first come

in

in againſt it. The firſt was, That if there were no more written on this Subject then Doctor Sibs's *Bruiſed Reed, and Souls Conflict, and Mr.* Joſ. Symonds *Deſerted Souls Caſe and Cure, there need no more: Eſpecially there being alſo Doctor* Preſtons *Works, and many of* Perkins, *to this uſe: and Mr.* Ball *and Mr.* Culverwel *of Faith, and divers the like. To this my own Judgement anſwered, That yet theſe brief* Directions *might adde ſomewhat that might be uſeful to the weak, as to the* Method *of their proceedings, if not to the matter: And my Brethren ſtopt my mouth by telling me, that others had written before me of* Heaven *and* Baptiſm: *and yet my labours were not loſt. Next this, I thought the Crudity and weakneſs of the Writing was ſuch, as ſhould prohibit the publication, it being unfit to thruſt upon the World, the haſty undigeſted lines that were written for the uſe of one perſon. To this my thoughts replied, That* 1. *For all that, it might be uſeful to poor Women, and Country people, who moſt commonly prove the troubled*

ſpirits

spirits for whose sakes I wrote it. Had I writ for the use of Learned men, I would have tried to make it fitter for their use: and if I could not, I would have suppressed it. 2. It was my Pride that nourished this scruple, which moved me not to appear so homely to the World, and therefore I cast it by. One thing more I confess did much prevail with me to make these Papers publick: and that is, the Antinomians common, confident obtrusion of their Anti-Evangelical doctrines and methods for comforting troubled souls. They are the most notorious Mountebanks in this Art, the highest pretenders, and unhappiest performers, that most of the Reformed Churches ever knew. And none usually are readier to receive their doctrines, then such weak women or unskilful people, that being in Trouble, are like a sick man in great pain, who is glad to hear what all can say, and to make trial of every thing by which he hath any hope of ease. And then there is so much Opium in these Mountebanks Nepenthes, or Anodines of Rest: so many principles of carnal

nal security and presumption, which tend to the present ease of the Patient, (whatever follow) that it is no wonder if some well-meaning Christians do quickly swallow the bait, and proclaim the rare effects of this Medicament, and the admirable skil of this unskilful Sect, to the ensnaring of others, especially that are in the like distress. Especially when they meet with some Divines of our own, who do deliver to them some Master-points of this Systeme of Mistakes, which are so necessarily concatenated to the rest, that they may easily see, if they have one, they must have all, unless they will hold Contradictions. As to instance in the Doctrine of Justification before Faith: or the dissolving the Obligation to Punishment (which is nothing but Remission of sin) before Faith: So that nothing remains since Christs death (as some) or since Gods Decree (as others) but onely to have our Pardon manifested, or to be Justified in Conscience, or (as some phrase it) to have that Justification which is terminated in Conscience. There

s a very Judicious man, Mr. Benjamin Woodbridge *of* Newbury *hath writ-en so excellent well against this Errour, nd in so small room, being but one Ser-mon, that I would advise all private Christians to get one of them, and peruse it, as one of the best, easiest, cheapest Pre-servatives against the contagion of this part of Antinomianism.*

I had not troubled the Reader with this Apologie, had I thought so well of this Writing as to be a sufficient Apologie for it self: or had I not taken it for a hainous Crime to speak Idly in Print.

For the Doctrine here contained, it is of a Middle strain, between (I think) the Extreams of some others. I have labour-ed so to build up Peace, as not thereby to fortifie Presumption. And perhaps in some Points you may see my meaning more plainly, which through the obscurity of former Writings I was mis-understood in. As for the Manner of this Writing, I must desire them that expect Learning or Exactness, to turn away their eyes: and know, that I wrote it not for such as

they. I use not to speak any thing but plain English to that Sex, or to that use and End for which I wrote these Lines. I wrote to the utmost verge of my Paper before I thought to make it publick, and so had no room for Marginal Quotations (nor time to transcribe that Copy that might have room) nor indeed much mind of them, if I had had both room and time.

As in all the Removes of my Life I have been still led to that place or state which was furthest from my own thoughts, and never designed or contrived by my self: so all the Writings that yet I have published are such as have been by some sudden unexpected occasion extorted from me, while those that I most affected have been stifled in the Conception: and those that I have most laboured in, must lie buried in the dust. that I may know it's God that is the Disposer of all. Experience perswadeth me to think, that God, who hath compelled me hereto, intendeth to make this hasty writing a means for the calming of some Troubled Souls. Which if he do, I have

my

y End. If I can do nothing to the hurches publick Peace, either through y own unskilfulneſs and unworthineſs, through the prevalency of the Malady: t will it be my comfort to further the eace of the pooreſt Chriſtian. (Though o the former alſo I ſhall contribute my eſt endeavours: and am with this ſend-ng to the Preſs ſome few ſheets to that nd, with our Worceſterſhire Agree-ment.) *The full accompliſhment of both: he ſubduing of the Prince of Darkneſs, Confuſion and Contention: the deſtroying f that Pride, ſelf-eſteem, ſelf-ſeeking, nd carnal-mindedneſs, which remaining even in the beſt, are the diſturbers of all Peace: the fuller diſcovery of the ſinful-neſs of impeaceable Principles, Diſpoſiti-ons and Practices: the nearer cloſure of all true Believers, and the haſtning of the Churches Everlaſting Peace: Theſe are his daily Prayers, who is*

May 7. 1653. *A zealous deſirer of the Peace of the Church, and of every faithful ſoul,*

RICHARD BAXTER.

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ERRATA.

THE RIGHT METHOD For a ſetled PEACE OF CONSCIENCE and Spirituall COMFORT.

In XXXII. Directions.

IT muſt be underſtood, that the Caſe here to be reſolved is not, How an unhumbled prophane ſinner that never was Convinced of Sin and Miſery, ſhould be brought to a ſetled Peace of Conſcience. Their Carnall Peace muſt firſt be broken, and they muſt be ſo far humbled, as to finde

the want and worth of Mercy, that Christ and his Consolations may not seem contemptible in their eyes. It is none of my business now, to give any advice for the furthering of this Conviction or Humiliation. But the Case in hand is; *How a Sinner may attain to a setled Peace of Conscience, and some competent measure of the Joy of the holy Ghost. Who hath been convinced of Sin and Misery, and long made a Profession of Holiness, but liveth in continual doubtings of their sincerity, and fears of Gods wrath, because of an exceeding Deadness of spirit, and a want of that Love to God and Delight in him, and sweetness in Duty, and witness of the Spirit, and Communion with God, and other the like Evidences which are found in the Saints.* How far the party is right or wrong in the Discovery of these Wants, I now meddle not. Whether they Judge rightly or wrongly the Directions may be Usefull to them. And though I purposely meddle not with the unhumbled that feel not the want of Christ and Mercy, yet most that falls may be usefull to all that profess the Christian faith. For I shall study so to avoid the extreames in my doctrinall Directions, as may conduce to your escaping the desperate extremes, of *Ungrounded Comforts*, and *Causless Terrours*, in your own spirit.

Of

Of my *Directions* the first shall be only Generall, and the rest more particular: And in all of them I must intreat you 1. To observe the Order and Method as well as the Matter; and that you would practise them in the same order as I place them. 2. And to remember that it is not only Comfortable words, but it is *Directions* for your own practice which here I prescribe you: And therefore that it is not the bare Reading of them that will Cure you; but if you mean to have the benefit of them, you must bestow more time in Practising them then I have done in Penning them: yea you must make it the work of your life. And let not that startle you or seem tedious to you; for it will be no more grievous a work to a well tempered soul, then eating, or drinking, or sleep, or recreation is to a healthfull Body; and then it is to an honest woman to Love and Delight in her Husband and her Children: which is no grievous task.

DIRECTION I.

1. Get as clear a discovery as you can of the true Cause of your Doubts and Troubles: for if you should mistake in the Cause, it would much frustrate the most excellent means for the Cure.

THe very same Doubts and Complaints may come from severall Causes in severall Persons, and therefore admit not of the same way of Cure: sometime the Cause begins in the body, and thence proceedeth to the minde: sometime it begins in the minde, and thence distempereth the body: sometime in the minde, it is most or first from worldly crosses and thence proceedeth to spirituall things: And of spirituall matters, sometimes it begins upon scruples or differences in Religion, or points of Doctrine: sometimes and most commonly, from the sense of our own Infirmities: sometimes it is only from ordinary Infirmities: sometimes from some extraordinary decayes of inward Grace: sometime from the neglects of

of some weighty duty: and sometimes from the deep wounds of some heynous secret, or scandalous sin: And sometimes it is meerly from the fresh discovery of that which before we never did discern: And sometimes from the violent assault of extraordinary Temptations: which of these is your own Case, you must be carefull to finde out, and to apply the means for Cure accordingly. Even of true Christians, the same means will not fit all. The difference of Natures as well as of actuall Cases must be considered. One hath need of that tender handling which would undo another: and he again hath need of that rowsing which another cannot bear. And therefore understand that when I have given you all the Directions that I can, I must (in the end hereof) advise you to take the Counsel of a skilfull Minister in applying and making use of them: For it is in this, as in the Case of Physick: When we have written the best Books of Receipts, or for Methodicall Cures, yet we must advise people to take heed how they use them without the advice of a learned and faithfull Physitian. For Medicines must not be only fitted to Diseases but to Bodies. That Medicine will kill one man, which will cure another of the same distemper: such difference there may be in their age, strength,

complexion and other things. So is it much in our present Case. And therefore as when all the Physick Books in the world are written, and all Receipts known, yet will there be still a Necessity of Physitians; so when all Discoveries and Directions are made in Divinity, there will still be a Necessity of a constant standing Ministry. And as ignorant Women and Emprikes do kill oft times more then they Cure, though they have the best Receipts, for want of Judgment and experience to use them aright: so do ignorant Teachers and Guides by mens souls, though they can say the same words as a Judicious Pastor, and repeat the same Texts of Scripture. Not that I mean, that such can do no good: Yes, much no doubt, if they will humbly, compassionately and faithfully improve their Talents, within the verge of their own Calling: which if they go beyond, ordinarily a remarkable Judgment followeth their best labours; both to the Churches and particular souls that make use of them. And therefore because (if my conjectural prognosticks fail not, as I daily pray they may) we are like to be more tried and plagued this way, then ever were any of our fore-fathers since *Adams* dayes till now, and seeing this is the hour of our Temptation, wherein God is purposely separating the chaff, and discovering

vering to the world, the dangers of injudicious misguided Zeal; I shall therefore both first and last advise you, as ever you would have a settled Peace of Conscience, keep out of the hand of vagrant and seducing Mountebanks, under what Names, or Titles, or pretences soever they may assault you. Especially suspect all that bestow as much pains to win you to their party, as to win you to Christ.

DIRECTION II.

2. Make as full a Discovery as you can, how much of the trouble of your minde doth arise from your Melancholy, and bodily distempers, and how much from discontenting afflictions in your worldly Estate, or Friends, or Name. And according to your Discovery make use of the Remedy.

I Put these two Causes of trouble here together in the beginning, because I will presently dismiss them, and apply the rest of these Directions only to those Troubles that

are raised from sins and wants in Grace.

1. For Melancholy, I have by long experience found it to have so great and common a hand in the fears and troubles of minde, that I meet not with one of many that live in great Troubles and fears for any long time together, but Melancholy is the main seat of them: Though they feel nothing in their body, but all in their Minde. I would have such persons make use of some able godly Phisitian, and he will help them to discern how much of their Trouble comes from Melancholy. Where this is the Cause, usually the party is Fearfull of almost every thing: a word, or a sudden thought will disquiet them: Sometime they are sad and scarce know why: all Comforts are of no continuance with them: but as soon as you have done comforting them, & they be never so well satisfied, yet the trouble returns in a few dayes or hours, as soon as the dark and troubled spirits return to their former force: They are still addicted to musing and solitarines, and thoughts will run in their mindes, that they cannot lay them by: If it go any thing farre; they are almost alwayes assaulted with Temptations to Blasphemy, to doubt whether there be a God, or a Christ, or the Scriptures be true; or whether there be a Heaven or a Hell: and oft tempted to speak

some

some blasphemous words against God; and this with such importunity that they can hardly forbear: and oft times they are tempted to make away themselves. When it goes so farre, they are next to the loss of the use of reason, if it be not prevented.

Now to those that finde that Melancholy is the Cause of their Troubles I would give this advice. 1. Expect not that Rational, Spiritual Remedies should suffice for this Cure: For you may as well expect that a good Sermon or comfortable words should cure the falling Sickness, or Palsie, or a broken head, as to be a sufficient Cure to your Melancholy fears. For this is as reall a bodily disease as the other: Only because it works on the spirits and phantasie, on which words of advice do also work, therefore such words, and Scripture, and Reason, may somewhat resist it, and may palliate or allay some of the effects at the present: but as soon as time hath worn off the force and effects of these Reasons, the distemper presently returns.

For the Humour hath the advantage 1. Of continuall presence, 2. Of a more necessary, naturall and sensible way of working. As if a man be in an easie Lethargy; you may awake him so long as you are calling on him aloud, but as soon as you cease, he is asleep

again: Such is the case of the Melancholy in their sorrows: For it is as natural for Melancholy to cause fears and disquietness of minde, as for Phlegme in a Lethargy to cause sleep.

Do not therefore lay the blame on your Books, Friends, Counsels, Instructions (no nor all on your Soul,) if these Troubles be not cured by words. But labour to discern truly how much of your Trouble comes this way, and then fix it in your minde in all your Enquiries, Reading and Hearing, that it is the other part of your Trouble which is truly Rational, and not this part of it which is from Melancholy, that these means were ordained to remove (though God may also bless them extraordinarily to do both.) Only constant importunate Prayer, is a fit and special means for the Curing of all.

2. When you have truly found out, how much of your Disquietness proceeds from Melancholy, acquit your soul from that part of it: Still remember in all your self-examinations, self-judgings and reflections on your heart, that it is not directly to be charged with those sorrowes that come from your Spleen: save only remotely, as all other Diseases are the fruits of sin: as a Lethargick dullness is the deserved fruit of sin; but he that should charge it immediatly on his soul,

should

ſhould wrong himſelf, and he that would attempt the Cure muſt do it on the Body.

3. If you would have theſe fears and troubles removed, apply your ſelf to the proper Cure of Melancholy. 1. Avoid all paſſions of ſorrow, fear and anger as much as you can; and all occaſions of diſcontent and grief. 2. Avoid much ſolitarineſs, and be moſt commonly in ſome cheerfull company: Not that I would have you do as the fooliſh ſinners of the world do, to drink away Melancholy, and keep company with ſenſual, vain and unprofitable perſons that will draw you deeper into ſin, and ſo make your wound greater inſtead of healing it, and multiply your Troubles when you are forced to look back on your ſinfull loſs of time: But keep company with the more cheerfull ſort of the Godly: There's no mirth like the mirth of Believers, which faith doth fetch from the bloud of Chriſt, and from the Promiſes of the Word, and from experiences of Mercy, and from the ſerious fore-apprehenſions of our everlaſting Bleſſedneſs. Converſe with men of ſtrongeſt faith that have this heavenly mirth, and can ſpeak experimentally of the Joy of the holy Ghoſt; and theſe will be a great help to the reviving of your ſpirit, and changing your Melancholy habit, ſo far as without

again: Such is the case of the Melancholy in their sorrows: For it is as natural for Melancholy to cause fears and disquietness of minde, as for Phlegme in a Lethargy to cause sleep.

Do not therefore lay the blame on your Books, Friends, Counsels, Instructions (no nor all on your Soul,) if these Troubles be not cured by words. But labour to discern truly how much of your Trouble comes this way, and then fix it in your minde in all your Enquiries, Reading and Hearing, that it is the other part of your Trouble which is truly Rational, and not this part of it which is from Melancholy, that these means were ordained to remove (though God may also bless them extraordinarily to do both.) Only constant importunate Prayer, is a fit and special means for the Curing of all.

2. When you have truly found out, how much of your Disquietness proceeds from Melancholy, acquit your soul from that part of it: Still remember in all your self-examinations, self-judgings and reflections on your heart, that it is not directly to be charged with those sorrowes that come from your Spleen: save only remotely, as all other Diseases are the fruits of sin: as a Lethargick dullness is the deserved fruit of sin; but he that should charge it immediatly on his soul,

should

should wrong himself, and he that would attempt the Cure must do it on the Body.

3. If you would have these fears and troubles removed, apply your self to the proper Cure of Melancholy. 1. Avoid all passions of sorrow, fear and anger as much as you can; and all occasions of discontent and grief. 2. Avoid much solitariness, and be most commonly in some cheerfull company: Not that I would have you do as the fooliſh sinners of the world do, to drink away Melancholy, and keep company with sensual, vain and unprofitable persons that will draw you deeper into sin, and so make your wound greater instead of healing it, and multiply your Troubles when you are forced to look back on your sinfull loss of time: But keep company with the more cheerfull sort of the Godly: There's no mirth like the mirth of Believers, which faith doth fetch from the bloud of Christ, and from the Promises of the Word, and from experiences of Mercy, and from the serious fore-apprehensions of our everlasting Blessedness. Converse with men of strongest faith that have this heavenly mirth, and can speak experimentally of the Joy of the holy Ghost; and these will be a great help to the reviving of your spirit, and changing your Melancholy habit, so far as without

out a Physitian it may be expected. Yet sometimes it may not be amiss to confer with some that are in your own Case, that you may see that your Condition is not singular: For Melancholy people in such distresses are ready to think, that never any was in the Case as they are in, or at least, never any that were truly godly: when you hear people of the most upright lives and that truly fear God, to have the very same complaints as you have your self, it may give you some hopes that it is not so bad as you before did imagin. However be sure that you avoid solitariness as much as you well can. 3. Also take heed of too deep, fixed, musing thoughts: studying and serious meditating be not duties for the deeply-Melancholy (as I shall shew more in the following Directions:) You must let those alone till you are better able to perform them; lest by attempting those duties which you cannot perform, you shall utterly disable your self from all: Therefore I would advise you, by all means to shake and rowse your self out of such musings, and suddenly to turn your thoughts away to something else. 4. To this end, be sure that you avoid Idleness and want of imployment: which as it is a life not pleasing to God, so is it the opportunity for Melancholy thoughts to be working, and

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the chiefeſt ſeaſon for Satan to tempt you. Never let the Devil finde you unimployed: but ſee that you go cheerfully about the works of your Calling, and follow it with diligence; and that time which you redeem for ſpiritual exerciſes, let it be moſt ſpent in Thanksgiving, and Prayſes, and heavenly Conference.

Theſe things may do much for prevention, and abating your diſeaſe if it be not gone too far: but if it be, you were beſt have recourſe to the Phyſitian, and expect Gods bleſſing in the uſe of means: and you will finde when your Body is once cured, the diſquietneſs of your Minde will vaniſh of it ſelf.

2. The ſecond part of this Direction was, That you take notice how much of your diſquietneſs may proceed from outward Croſſes: for it is ordinary for theſe to lye at the root and bring the heart into a diſquiet and diſcontent, and then trouble for ſin doth follow after. Alas, how oft have I ſeen that verified of the Apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* 7. 10. The ſorrow of the world worketh death. How many even godly people have I known, that through croſſes in children or friends, or loſſes in their eſtates, or wrongs from men, or perplexities that through ſome unadviſedneſs they were caſt into, or the like, have

fallen

fallen into mortall Diſeaſes, or into ſuch a fixed Melancholy, that ſome of them have gone beſides themſelves, and others have lived in fears and doubting ever after, by the removall of the diſquietneſs to their conſciences? How ſad a thing is it, that we ſhould thus add to our own Afflictions? and the heavier we judge the burden, the more we lay on! As if God had not done enough, or would not ſufficiently afflict us? We may more comfortably bear that which God layeth on us, then that which we immediately lay upon our ſelves! Croſſes are not great or ſmall according to the bulk of the matter, but according chiefly to the minde of the ſufferer. Or elſe how could holy men rejoyce in Tribulation, and be exceeding glad that they are accounted worthy to ſuffer for Chriſt? Reproaches, wrongs, loſſes are all without you: unleſs you open them the door wilfully your ſelf, they cannot come in to the heart. God hath not put the Joy or Grief of your Heart in any other mans power, but in your own. It is you therefore that do your ſelves the greateſt miſchief. God afflicts your body, or men wrong you in your ſtate or name (a ſmall hurt if it go no further;) and therefore you will afflict your ſoul! But a ſadder thing yet is it to conſider of, that men fearing God ſhould ſo highly

value

value the things of the world. They who in their Covenants with Christ are engaged, to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil! They that have taken God in Christ for their Portion, for their All! and have resigned themselves and all that they have to Christs disposé! whose very business in this world, and their Christian life, consisteth so much in resisting the devil, mortifying the flesh, and overcoming the world: and it is Gods business in his inward works of Grace, and his outward teachings, and sharp afflictions, and examples of others, to convince them of the vanity and vexation of the world, and throughly to wean them from it: And yet that it should be so high in their estimation, and sit so close to their hearts, that they cannot bear the loss of it without such discontent, disquiet and distraction of minde: Yea though when all is gone, they have their God left them, they have their Christ still, whom they took for their Treasure, they have opportunities for their souls, they have the sure promise of Glory, yea and a promise, that all things shall work together for their good; yea and for that one thing that is taken from them, they have yet a hundred outward Mercies remaining; that yet even Believers should have so much unbelief! and have their Faith to seek when they

they should use it and live by it! and that God should seem so small in their eyes as not to satisfie or quit them, unless they have the world with him; and that the world should still seem so Amiable, when God hath done so much to bring it into contempt! Truly this (and more) shews that the work of *Mortification* is very imperfect in professors, and that we bend not the force of our daily strivings and endeavours that way. If Christians did bestow but as much time and pains, in Mortifying the flesh, and getting down the Interest of it in the soul, that Christs Interest may be advanced, as they do about Controversies, external duties, formalities, tasks of devotion, and self tormenting fears, O what excellent Christians should we then be! and how happily would most of our disquiet be removed! Alas, if we are so unfit to part with one outward comfort now, upon the disposal of our fathers providence, how should we forsake all for Christ? or what shall we do at death when all must be parted with. As ever therefore you would live in true Christian Peace, set more by Christ, and less by the world, and all things in it; and hold all that you possess, so loosely, that it may not be grievous to you when you must leave them.

So much for the Troubles that arise from

your

your Body and outward ſtate: All the reſt ſhall be directed for the Curing of thoſe Troubles that ariſe immediatly from more Spiritual Cauſes.

DIRECTION III.

3. Be ſure that you firſt lay ſound apprehenſions of Gods nature, in your underſtanding: and lay them deeply.

THis is the firſt Article of your Creed, and the firſt part of Life Eternal, to know God: His ſubſtance is quite paſt humane underſtanding; therefore never make any attempt to reach the knowledge of it, or to have any poſitive conceivings of it, for they will be all but Idols, or falſe conceptions: but his Attributes are manifeſted to our underſtandings. Well, conſider, that even under the terrible Law, when God proclaims to *Moſes* his own Name, and therein his Nature, *Exod.* 34.6,7. the firſt and greateſt part is, *The Lord, God, Merciful and Gracious, long ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.* And he hath ſworn *that he hath no pleaſure in the death*

death of a sinner, but rather that he return and live. Think not therefore of Gods Mercifulnes, with diminishing, extenuating thoughts, nor limit it by the bounds of our frail understandings; for the heavens are not so far above the earth, as his thoughts and wayes are above ours. Still remember that you must have no low thoughts of Gods Goodnes; but apprehend it as bearing proportion with his Power. As it is blasphemy to limit his Power, so it is to limit his Goodnes. The advantages that your soul will get by this right knowledge and estimation of Gods Goodnes, will be these.

1. This will make God appear more Amiable in your eyes; and then you will Love him more readily and abundantly. And Love 1. Is effectually consolatory in the very working: so much Love, usually so much Comfort (I mean this Love of Complacency: for a Love of Desire there may be without comfort.) 2. It will breed perswasions of Gods Love to you again, and so Comfort. 3. It will be an unquestionable evidence of true Grace, and so Comfort.

The Affections follow the Understandings conceptions. If you think of God as one that is glad of all advantages against you, and delighteth in his Creatures misery, it is impossible you should Love him. The

Love

Love of our selves is so deeply rooted in nature, that we cannot lay it by, nor Love any thing that is Absolutely and directly against us. We conceive of the devil as an Absolute Enemy to God and man, and one that seeks our destruction, and therefore we cannot Love him: And the great Cause why troubled souls do Love God no more, is because they represent him to themselves in an ugly, odious shape: To think of God, as one that seeks and delighteth in mans ruine, is to make him as the devil; and then what wonder if in stead of Loving him, and Delighting in him, you tremble at the thoughts of him, and fly from him! As I have observed Children, when they have seen the devil painted on a wall, in an ugly shape, they have partly feared, and partly hated it: If you do so by God in your fancy, it is not putting the Name of [God] on him when you have done, that will reconcile your Affections to him, as long as you strip him of his Divine Nature. Remember the holy Ghost's description of God, 1 *Joh.* 4. 16. *God is Love.* Write these words deep in your Understanding.

2. Hereby you will have this Advantage also, that your thoughts of God will be more sweet and delightfull to you: For as Glorious and beautifull sights to your eyes, and melodious sounds to your ears, and sweet smels,

smels, tastes, &c. are all delightfull: when things deformed, stinking, &c. are all loathsome: and we turn away from one with abhorrency, but for the other, we would often see, taste, &c. and enjoy them: So is it with the objects of our minde; God hath given no command for Duty, but what most perfectly agreeth with the nature of the object. He hath therefore bid us, Love God and Delight in him above all, because he is above all in Goodness, even infinitely and unconceivably Good: else we could not Love him above all, nor would he ever command us so to do; The object is ever as exactly fitted to its part (as to draw out the Love and Delight of our hearts) as the Precept is on its part (to oblige us to it.) And indeed the Nature of things is a precept to Duty, and is which we call, The Law of Nature.

3. Hereupon will follow this further Advantage, that your Thoughts will be both easilyer drawn toward God, and more frequent and constant on him. For delightfull objects draw the heart to them, as the Loadstone doth the Iron: How gladly, and freely, and frequently do you think of your dearest friends? And if you did firmly conceive of God, as one that is ten thousand times more Gracious, Loving and Amiable then any friend that you have in the world, it would

would make you not only to Love him above all friends, but also more freely, delightfully and unweariedly to think of him.

4. And then you would hence have this further Advantage, that you would have lesse backwardnes to any Duty, and lesse wearines in Duty: you would finde more delight in Prayer, Meditation and speech of God, when once God himself were more Lovely and delightfull in your eyes.

5. All these Advantages would produce a further, that is, The growth of all your Graces: For its impossible but this growth of Love, and frequent delightfull thoughts of God and addresses to him, should cause an increase of all the rest.

6. Hereupon your Evidences would be more clear and discernable: For Grace in strength and action would be easily found: and would not this resolve all your doubts at once?

7. Yea the very exercise of these severall Graces would be comfortable.

8. And hereupon you would have more humble familiarity and communion with God: For Love, Delight and frequent addresses would overcome strangenes and disacquaintance, which make us fly from God, as a Fish, or Bird, or wild beast will from the face of a man, and would give us acces with

boldnes

boldnes and confidence. And this would banish sadnes and terrour, as the Sun dispelleth darkness and cold.

9. At least you would hence have this advantage, That the fixed apprehension of Gods Goodnes and mercifull nature, would cause a fixed apprehension of the Probability of your Happines, as long as you are willing to be Happy in Gods way. For reason will tell you, that he who is Love it self, and whose Goodnes is equal to his Almightines, and who hath sworn, that he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he repent and live, will not destroy a poor soul that lyeth in submission at his feet, and is so far from resolved rebellion against him, that it grieveth that it is no better and can please him no more.

10. However, these right apprehensions of God, would overcome those terrours which are raised only by false apprehensions of him: And doubtless a very great part of mens causeless troubles, are raised from such misapprehensions of God. For Satan knows that if he can Bring you to think of God as a cruel Tyrant, and bloudthirsty man-hater, then he can drive you from him in terrour, and turn all your Love and cheerfull obedience into hatred and slavish fear. I say therefore again, Do not only get, but also fix

fix deep in your understanding, the highest thoughts of Gods natural Goodness and Graciousness that possibly you can raise: for when they are at the highest, they come short ten thousand fold.

Object. But, Gods Goodness lyeth not in Mercy to men, as I have read in great Divines: he may be perfectly Good, though he should for ever torment the most innocent creatures?

Answ. These are ignorant presumptuous intrusions into that which is unsearchable. Where doth Scripture say as you say? Judge of God as he revealeth himself, or you will but delude your self and abuse him. All his works represent him mercifull: for his Mercy is over all his works, and legible in them all. His word saith, *He is Good and doth Good*, *Psal.* 119.68. and 145.9. How himself doth proclaim his own Name, *Exod.* 34.6,7. I told you before. The most mercifull men are his liveliest Image: and therefore he plants Mercy in them in their conversion, as a principal part of their new nature: and commands of mercifulness are a great part of his Law; and he bids us, *Be mercifull as our heavenly Father is mercifull*, Luk. 6.36. Now if this were none of his Nature, how could he be the pattern of our new nature herein? and if he were not infinitely Mercifull himself,

himself, how could we be required to be Mercifull as he is? Who dare say, I am more Mercifull then God?

Object. But God is Juſt as well as Mercifull: and for all his Mercifull nature, he will damn moſt of the world for ever in hell.

Anſw. 1. But *James* ſaith, *Mercy rejoiceth againſt Judgement*, Jam. 2. 13. 2. God is neceſſarily the Governour of the world (while there is a world) and therefore muſt govern it in Juſtice, and ſo muſt not ſuffer his Mercy to be perpetually abuſed by wicked, wilfull, contemptuous ſinners. But then conſider two things: 1. That he deſtroyeth not humble ſouls that lye at his feet, and are willing to have Mercy on his eaſie termes; but only the ſtubborn deſpiſers of his Mercy: He damneth none but thoſe that will not be ſaved in his way; that is, that will not accept of Chriſt and ſalvation freely given them (I ſpeak of thoſe that hear the Goſpel: for others their caſe is more unknown to us:) And is it any diminution to his infinite Mercy, that he will not ſave thoſe that will not be intreated to accept of ſalvation? 2. And conſider how long he uſeth to wait on ſinners, and even beſeech them to be reconciled to him, before he deſtroyeth them: and that he heapeth multitudes of Mercies on them, even in their rebellion, to draw them

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to Repentance and so to Life? and is it unmercifulness yet if such men perish?

Object. But if God were so infinite in Mercy, as you say, Why doth he not make all these men willing, that so they may be saved?

Answ. God having created the world and all things in it, at first, did make them in a certain nature and order, and so stablish them, as by a fixed Law: and he thereupon is their Governour, to govern every thing according to its nature. Now mans Nature was to be Principled with an Inclination to his own Happiness, and to be lead to it by objects in a Morall way, and in the choice of means to be a free agent, and the Guider of himself under God. As Governour of the Rational creature, God doth continue that same course of Ruling them by Laws, and drawing them by ends and objects, as their natures do require: And in this way he is not wanting to them: His Laws are now Laws of Grace, and universal in the tenour of the free Gift and Promise: for he hath there given life in Christ to all that will have it: and the objects propounded are sufficient in their kinde, to work even the most wonderfull effects on mens souls; for they are, God himself, and Christ, and glory: Besides, God giveth men natural faculties, that they

may have the use of reason; and there is nothing more unreasonable then to refuse this offered Mercy. He giveth inducing Arguments in the written Word and Sermons; and addeth such Mercies and Afflictions that one would think should bow the hardest heart. Besides, the strivings and motions of his Spirit within, which are more then we can give an account of. Now is not this as much as belongs to God as Governour of the Creature according to its Nature? And for the Giving of a New nature, and Creating New hearts in men, after all their rebellious rejecting of Grace, this is a certain Miracle of Mercy, and belongs to God in another Relation (even as the free chooser of his Elect,) and not directly as the Governour of the universe. This is from his special Providence, and the former from his General. Now special Providences are not to be as common as the General, nor to subvert Gods ordinary established Course of Government. If God please to stop Jordan, and dry up the Red Sea for the passage of the *Israelites*, and to cause the Sun to stand still for *Joshua*, must he do so still for every man in the world, or else be accounted unmercifull? The sense of this Objection is plainly this: God is not so rich in Mercy, except he will New make all the World, or Govern

Govern it above its Nature. Suppose a King know his subjects to be so wicked, that they have every one a full design to famish or kill themselves, or poison themselves with something which is enticing by its sweetness. The King not only makes a Law, strictly charging them all to forbear to touch that poison, but he sendeth special Messengers to entreat them to it, and tell them the danger? If these men will not hear him, but wilfully poison themselves, is he therefore unmercifull? But suppose that he hath three or four of his sons that are infected with the same wickedness, and he will not only command and intreat them, but he will also lock them up, or keep the poison from them, or will feed them by violence with bitter food? is he unmercifull unless he will do so by all the rest of his Kingdom?

Lastly, If all this will not satisfie you; Consider, 1. That it is most certain that God is Love, and infinite in Mercy, and hath no pleasure in the death of sinners. 2. But it is utterly uncertain to us, how God worketh on mans will inwardly by his Spirit. 3. Or yet what intollerable inconvenience there may be, if God should work in other wayes, therefore we must not upon such uncertainties, deny certainties; nor from some unreasonable scruples about the manner of Gods

working Grace, deny the bleſſed Nature of God, which himſelf hath moſt evidently proclaimed to the world.

I have ſaid the more of this, becauſe I finde Satan harp ſo much on this ſtring, with many troubled ſouls, eſpecially on the advantage of ſome common doctrines. For falſe doctrine ſtill tends to the overthrow of ſolid Peace and Comfort. Remember therefore before all other thoughts for the obtaining of Peace, to get high thoughts of the Gracious and Lovely Nature of God.

DIRECTION IV.

4. *Next this,* Be ſure that you deeply apprehend the Gracious Nature, Diſpoſition and Office of the Mediator JESUS CHRIST.

THough there can no more be ſaid of the Gracious Nature of the Son, then of the Father's, even, that his Goodneſs is Infinite; yet theſe two advantages this Conſideration will add unto the former. 1. You will ſee here Goodneſs and Mercy in its condeſcenſion, and neerer to you then in the Divine Nature alone it was. Our thoughts of

of God are neceſſarily more ſtrange, becauſe of our Infinite diſtance from the Godhead: and therefore our apprehenſions of Gods Goodneſs will be the leſſe working, becauſe leſſe familiar. But in Chriſt God is come down into our Nature, and ſo Infinite Goodneſs and Mercy is incarnate. The man Chriſt Jeſus is able now to ſave to the utmoſt all that come to God by him. We have a Mercifull High Prieſt that is acquainted with our Infirmities. 2. Herein we ſee the Will of God putting forth it ſelf for our help in the moſt aſtoniſhing way that could be imagined. Here is more then meerly a Gracious inclination. Its an *Office* of ſaving and ſhewing Mercy alſo that Chriſt hath undertaken; even to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt: to bring home ſtraying ſouls to God: to be the great Peace-maker between God and man: to Reconcile God to man and man to God: and ſo to be the Head and Husband of his people. Certainly the Devil ſtrangely wrongeth poor troubled ſouls in this point; that he can bring them to have ſuch hard ſuſpicious thoughts of Chriſt, and ſo much to overlook the Glory of Mercy which ſo ſhineth in the face of the Son of Mercy it ſelf. How can we more contradict the Nature of Chriſt, and the Goſpel-deſcription of him, then to think him a

deſtroying hater of his creatures, and one that watcheth for our halting, and hath more mind to hurt us then to help us? How could he have manifeſted more willingneſs to ſave? and more tender compaſſion to the ſouls of men, then he hath fully manifeſted? That the Godhead ſhould condeſcend to aſſume our Nature, is a thing ſo wonderfull even to aſtoniſhment, that it puts faith to it to apprehend it: For it is ten thouſand times more condeſcenſion, then for the greateſt King to become a Fly or a Toad to ſave ſuch creatures. And ſhall we ever have low and ſuſpicious thoughts of the Gracious and Mercifull Nature of Chriſt after ſo ſtrange and full a diſcovery of it? If twenty were ready to drown in the ſea, and if one that were able to ſwim and fetch them all out, ſhould caſt himſelf into the water, and offer them his help, were it not fooliſh ingratitude for any to ſay, *I know not yet whether he be willing to help me, or not*; and ſo to have Jealous thoughts of his good will; and ſo periſh in refuſing his help? How tenderly did Chriſt deal with all ſorts of ſinners? He profeſſed that he *came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be ſaved.* Did he weep over a rejected unbeleeving people, and was he deſirous of their deſolation? *How oft would he have*

have gathered them as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings (mark, that he would have done this for them that he caſt off) *and they would not?* When his Diſciples would have had *fire come down from Heaven to conſume thoſe that refuſed him*, he reproves them, and tells them, *They knew not of what ſpirit they were of* (the common caſe of them that miſcarry, by ſuffering their zeal to overrun their Chriſtian Wiſdome and meekneſs.) Yea he prayeth for his crucifyers, and that on the Croſſe, not forgetting them in the heat of his ſufferings: Thus he doth by the wicked: But to thoſe that follow him his tenderneſs is unſpeakable, as you would have ſaid your ſelf if you had but ſtood by and ſeen him waſhing his Diſciples feet, and wiping them; or bidding *Thomas* put his fingers into his ſide, *and be not faithleſs but beleeving*. Alas that the Lord Jeſus ſhould come from Heaven to earth, from Glory into humane fleſh, and paſſe through a life of miſery to a Croſſe, and from the Croſſe to the grave, to manifeſt openly to the world the abundance of his Love, and the tenderneſs of his heart to ſinners, and that after all this we ſhould ſuſpect him of cruelty, or hardheartedneſs and unwillingneſs to ſhew mercy, and that the devil can ſo far delude us, as to make us think of the

Lamb of God, as if he were a Tyger or devourer!

But I will say no more of this, because Dr *Sibbs* in his *Bruised Reed* hath said so much already: Only remember, that if you would methodically proceed to the attaining of solid Comfort, this is the next stone that must be laid; You must be deeply possessed with apprehensions of the most Gracious Nature and Office of the Redeemer, and the exceeding tenderness of his heart to lost sinners.

DIRECTION V.

5. *The next step in right order to Comfort is this:* You must beleeve and consider, the full sufficiency of Christs Sacrifice and Ransome, for All.

THe Controversies about this you need not be troubled at: for as almost all confess this sufficiency, so the Scripture it self, by the plainness and fullness of its expression makes it as clear as the light, that Christ died *for All*. The fuller proof of this I have given you in publike, and shall do yet more publikely, if God will. If Satan would perswade

perſwade you either that no Ranſome or Sacaifice was ever given for you, or that therefore you have no Redeemer to truſt in, and no Saviour to beleeve in, and no Sanctuary to fly to from the wrath of God; he muſt firſt prove you either to be no loſt ſinner, or to be a final-impenitent unbeleever, that is, that you are dead already; or elſe he muſt delude your underſtanding, to make you think that Chriſt died not for *All*; and then I confeſs he hath a ſore advantage againſt your faith and comfort.

DIRECTION VI.

6. *The next thing in order to be done is this:* Get clear apprehenſions of the freeneſs, fullneſs, and univerſality of the New Covenant or Law of Grace.

I Mean, the Promiſe of Remiſſion, Juſtification, Adoption and Salvation to All, ſo they will beleeve. No man on earth is excluded in the tenor of this Covenant: and therefore certainly you are not excluded: and if not excluded, then you muſt needs be included. Shew where you are excluded if you

you can! You will say, But for all this, All men are not Justified and saved: *Ans.* True: because they Will not be perswaded to Accept the Mercy that is freely given them.

The use that I would have you make of this, I will shew in the next.

DIRECTION VII.

7. You must get the right understanding of the difference between General Grace and Special: and between the Possibility, Probability, Conditional certainty, and Absolute certainty of your Salvation: and so between the Comfort on the former ground, and on the later.

AND here I shall open to you a rich mine of Consolation.

Understand therefore that as every particular part of the house is built on the foundation, so is every part of Special Grace built on General Grace. Understand also, that all the four last mentioned particulars do belong to this General Grace: As also, that though no man can have Absolute Certainty

tainty of Salvation, from the consideration of this General Grace alone, yet may it afford abundance of relief to distressed souls, yea much true Consolation. Lastly, Understand, that All that hear the Gospel may take part in this Consolation, though they have no Assurance of their Salvation at all, no nor any special Saving Grace.

Now when you understand these things well, this is the Use that I would have you make of them.

1. Do not begin the way to your Spiritual Peace, by enquiring after the sincerity of your Graces, and trying your selves by Signes: Do not seek out for Assurance of Salvation in the first place; nor do not look and study after the special Comforts which come from certainty of Special Grace, before you have learned 1. To perform the Duty, 2. And to Receive the Comforts which General Grace affordeth. Such immethodical disorderly proceedings, keepeth thousands of poor ignorant Christians in darkness and trouble almost all their daies. Let the first thing you do, be to obey the voice of the Gospel, which calleth you to Accept of Christ and special Mercy: *This is the Record that God hath given us eternal Life, and this life is in his Son: He that hath the Son hath life.* Fix this deep in your minde;

that

that the nature of the Gospel is first to declare to our Understandings, the most gracious Nature, undertakings and performances of Christ for us (which must be beleeved to be true:) And 2. To Offer this Christ with all his special Mercy to every man to whom this Gospel comes, and to Intreat them to Accept Christ and Life, which is freely given and offered to them. Remember then, You are a lost sinner: for certain, Christ and Life in him is given and offered to you. Now your first work is, Presently to accept it: not to make an unseasonable enquiry, Whether Christ be yours? but to Take him that he may be yours. If you were Condemned, and a Pardon were freely Given you, on Condition you would Thankfully Take it, and it were offered to you and you intreated to take it; what would you do in this Case? would you spend your time and thoughts in searching whether this Pardon be already yours? or would you not presently Take it that it may be yours? Or if you were ready to famish, and food were offered you; would you stand asking first, How shall I know that it is mine? or rather Take and Eat it, when you are sure it may be yours if you will. Let me intreat you therefore, when the devil clamours in your ears [Christ and Salvation is none of thine,]

suppose

suppose that this voice of God in the Gospel were still in your ears, yea let it be still in your memory [O Take Christ, and Life in him, that thou maist be saved:] still think that you hear *Paul* following you with these words [*We are Embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: We pray you, in Christs stead, be Reconciled to God.*] Will you but remember this, when you are on your knees in sorrow; and when you would fain have Christ and Life, and you are afraid that God will not give them to you? I say, Remember then, God stands by Beseeching you to Accept the same thing which you are Beseeching him to give. God is the first suitor and solicitor: God Prayes you to Take Christ, and you Pray him to give you Christ: what have you now to do, but to Take him? And here understand, that this Taking is no Impossible business; it is no more but your hearty *Consenting*, as I shall tell you more anon. If you did but well understand and consider, that Beleeving is the great Duty that God calls you to perform, and promiseth to save you if you do truly perform it; and that this Beleeving is to Take, or Consent to have the same Mercy which you pray for, and are troubled for fear least you shall misse of it, even Christ and life in him; this would presently draw forth your

Consent,

Conſent, and that in ſo open and expreſs a way, as you could not but diſcover it, and have the comfort of it. Remember this then, That your firſt work is to Beleeve, or Accept an offered Saviour.

2. You muſt learn(as I told you,) to Receive the Comforts of Univerſal or General Grace, before you ſearch after the Comforts of Special Grace. (I here ſuppoſe you ſo far ſound in the doctrine of the Goſpel, as neither with ſome on one hand, to look ſo much at Special Grace, as to deny that General Grace which is the Ground of it, or preſuppoſed to it: nor with others, ſo far to look at univerſal Mercy as to deny Special.) Satan will tell you, that all your Duties have been done in hypocriſie, and you are unſound at the heart, and have not a drop of ſaving Grace: You are apt to entertain this, and conclude that all this is true: If I had any Grace, I ſhould have more Life, and Love and Delight in God; more tenderneſs of heart, more growth in Grace: I ſhould not carry about ſuch a Rock in my breaſt; ſuch a ſtupid, dull, inſenſible ſoul, *&c.*

At the preſent let us ſuppoſe that all this be true: yet ſee what a world of Comfort you may gather from Univerſal or General Mercy. I have before opened to you four parts of it in the Cauſe of your Happineſs,

and

and three in the Effect, which may each of them afford much relief to your troubled ſoul.

1. Suppoſe you are yet Graceleſs, is it nothing to you that it is a God of Infinite Mercy that you have to do with? whoſe Compaſſions are ten thouſand times greater then your deareſt friends or your own husbands.

Object. O but yet he will not ſave the Graceleſs?

Anſw. True: but he is the more ready to give Grace, that you may be ſaved. *If any of you* (mark, any of you) *do lack wiſdome, let him aſk it of God, who giveth to all men liberally* (without deſert) *and upbraideth not* (with our unworthineſs or former faults) *and it ſhall be given him*, Jam. 1. 4. *If you that are evil can give good gifts to your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that aſk it*, Luk. 11. 13. Suppoſe your life were in the hands of your own husband, or your childrens life in your hands, would it not exceedingly comfort you or them, to conſider, whoſe hands they are in? though yet you had no further Aſſurance how you ſhould be uſed? It may be you will ſay, But God is no Father to the Graceleſs? I anſwer: He is not their Father in ſo neer and ſtrict a ſenſe as he is the Father of Beleevers: but yet a Father he is even

to

to the wicked: and to convince men of his Fatherly Mercy to them, he often ſo ſtileth himſelf. He ſaith by *Moſes*, Deut. 32. 6. to a wicked generation, whoſe ſpot was not the ſpot of his children, *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? Is not he thy Father that bought thee? hath he not made thee and eſtabliſhed thee?* And the Prodigall could call him *Father* for his encouragement, before he returned to him, *Luk.* 15. 16, 17, 18. For my own part, I muſt needs profeſs, that my ſoul hath more frequent ſupport from the conſideration of Gods Gracious and Merciful nature, then from the Promiſe it ſelf.

2. Furthermore: Suppoſe you were Graceleſs at the preſent; yet is it not an exceeding Comfort, that there is one of ſuch Infinite Compaſſions as the Lord Chriſt, who hath aſſumed our Nature, and is come down to ſeek and ſave that which was loſt; and is more tender hearted to poor ſinners, then we can poſſibly conceive? yea who hath made it his Office to Heal, and Relieve, and Reſtore, and Reconcile: Yea that hath himſelf endured ſuch temptations as many of ours: *For we have not an high-Prieſt which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without ſin: Let us therefore* (ſaith the holy,

holy Ghoſt) *come boldly unto the throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and finde Grace to help in time of need,* Heb.4.15,16. *Foraſmuch as the children were partakers of fleſh and bloud, he alſo himſelf likewiſe took part with them, that he might deſtroy through death, him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime ſubject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a Merciful and faithful high-Prieſt in things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the ſins of the people: For in that he himſelf hath ſuffered being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted,* Heb.2.14, 15, 16, 17, 18. Have you diſcountenance from men? Chriſt had much more. Doth God ſeem to forſake you? ſo he did by Chriſt. Are you fain to lye on your knees crying for Mercy? why Chriſt in the days of his fleſh, was fain to offer up *ſtrong cryes and tears, to him that was able to ſave him: and was heard in that he feared.* It ſeems that Chriſt had diſtreſſing fears as well as you, though not ſinful fears. Have you horrid temptations? why Chriſt was tempted to caſt himſelf headlong, and to worſhip the Devil,

Devil, for worldly preferment: Yea the devil had power to carry his body up and down, to the pinacle of the Temple, and the top of a mountain. If he had such power of you, would you not think your self certainly his slave? I conclude therefore, as it is an exceeding ground of comfort to all the sick people in a City, to know that there is a most merciful and skilful Physitian, that is easily able to cure them, and hath undertaken to do it freely for all that will take him for their Physitian: so is it a ground of exceeding comfort to the worst of sinners, to all sinners (that are yet alive, and have not blasphemed the holy Ghost,) to know what a Merciful and sufficient Saviour hath undertaken the work of mans Redemption.

3. Also, Suppose yet that you are Graceless: Is it nothing that a sufficient Sacrifice and Ransome is given for you? This is the very foundation of all solid Peace. I think this is a great comfort, to know that God looks now for no satisfaction at your hand: and that the Number or Greatness of your sins, as such, cannot now be your ruine. For certainly, no man shall perish for want of the payment of his Ransome, or of an expiatory Sacrifice for sin: but only for want of a willing heart to Accept him that hath freely Ransomed them.

4. Also,

4. Alſo, Suppoſe you are Graceleſs; Is it nothing that God hath under his hand and ſeal made a full and free Deed of Guift, to you and all ſinners, of Chriſt, and with him of pardon and ſalvation? and all this on Condition of your Acceptance or Conſent? I know the Deſpiſers of Chriſt ſhall be miſerable for all this: But for you that would fain have Chriſt, is it no comfort to know that you ſhall have him if you will? and to finde this to be the ſumme of the Goſpel? I know you have oft read thoſe free offers, *Rev.22.17. Whoſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely: Hoe every one that thirſteth, come, and drink,* &c. Almoſt all that I have hitherto ſaid to you, is compriſed in that one text, *Joh.3.16. God ſo loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

And as I have ſhewed it you in the Cauſes (what Comfort even General Mercie may afford) ſo let me a little ſhew it you in the Effects. I mean, not only in that God is now ſatisfied; but as to your ſelf and every ſinner, theſe three things are produced hereby.

1. There is now a Poſſibility of Salvation to you. And certainly even that ſhould be a very great Comfort. I know you will meet with

with ſome Divines, who will tell you that this is no effect of Chriſts death; and that elſe Chriſt ſhould die for God, if he procured him a Power to ſave which he had not before: But this is no better then a Reproaching of our Redeemer. Suppoſe that a Traytor have ſo abuſed a King, that it will neither ſtand with his own Honour, nor Juſtice, nor Laws to pardon him: If his Compaſſion were ſo great that his own Son ſhall ſuffer for him, that ſo the King might be capable of pardoning him, without any diminution of his Honour or Juſtice; were it not a vile reproach, if this Traytor ſhould tell the Prince that ſuffered for him [It was for your Father that you ſuffered to procure him a Power of pardoning: it was not for me.] Its true, the King could not pardon him, without ſatisfaction to his Honour and Juſtice. But this was not through any Impotency: but becauſe the thing was not fit to be done: and ſo was Morally Impoſſible. For in Law we ſay, Diſhoneſt things are Impoſſible. And it had been no loſſe to the King if the Traytor had not been pardoned. So is it in our Caſe. And therefore Chriſts ſufferings could not be more eminently *for us*, then by enabling the offended Majeſty to forgive us; and ſo taking the greateſt impediment out of the way: for when impediments

impediments are once removed, Gods Nature is ſo Gracious and prone to Mercy, that he would ſoon pardon us when once it is fit to be done, and ſo Morally poſſible in the fulleſt ſenſe: only mens own Unwillingneſs now ſtands in the way, and makes it to be not fully fit to be yet done. Its true, in a Remote ſenſe, the Pardon of ſin was alway Poſſible; but in the neereſt ſenſe it was Impoſſible, till Chriſt made it Poſſible by his Satisfaction.

2. Nay, though you were yet Graceleſs, you have now this Comfort, that your Salvation is Probable as well as Poſſible. You are very fair for it. The termes be not hard in themſelves, on which it is tendered. For Chriſts yoak is eaſie and his burden light, and his Commands are not grievous. *The Word is nigh you*, even the offer of Grace: you need not ſay, *Who ſhall aſcend to Heaven, or go down to hell?* Rom. 10. But this will appear in the next.

3. Yea, this exceeding Comfort there is, even for them that are Graceleſs, that their Salvation is *Conditionally Certain*, and the Condition is but their *own Willingneſs*. They may all have Chriſt and Life if they will. Now I deſire you in all your Doubts, that you will well conſider and improve this one Truth and Ground of Comfort. Would you,

in

in the midst of your groans, and complaints, and fears, take it for a small mercy, to be certain that you shall have Christ if you will? when you are praying for Christ in fear and anguish of spirit, if an Angel or voice from Heaven should say to you [It shall be unto thee according to thy will: If thou wilt have Christ and Life in him, thou shalt:] would this be no Comfort to you? would it not revive you, and overcome your fears?

By this time I hope you see what abundance of Comfort General Mercy or Grace may afford the soul, before it perceive (yea or receive,) any special Grace (though few of those that receive not Special Grace can make much use of General, yet it is propounded to them as well as others.)

1. All the terrifying Temptations which are grounded on misrepresentations of God (as if he were a cruel destroyer to be fled from,) are dispelled by the due consideration of his Goodness, and the deep setled apprehensions of his Gracious, Merciful, Lovely Nature (which indeed is the first work of true Religion, and the very master Radical Act of true Grace, and the chief maintainer of Spiritual Life and Motion.)

2. All these Temptations are yet more effectually dispelled by considering this Merciful

ciful Divine Nature dwelling in flesh, becoming man, by condescending to the Assumption of our humane Nature; and so come neer us, and assuming the Office of being the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Saviour of the world.

3. All your doubts and fears that proceed from your former sins, whether of youth or of age, of ignorance or of knowledge; and those which proceed from your Legal unworthiness; have all a present Remedy in the fullness and sufficiency of Christs satisfaction, even for all the world: so that no sin (except the excepted sin) is so great, but it is fully satisfied for: and though you are unworthy, yet Christ is worthy; and he came into the world to save only the unworthy (in the strict and Legal sense.)

4. All your doubts and fears that arise from an apprehension of Gods *unwillingness* to shew you Mercy, and to give you Christ and Life in him, arise from the misapprehension of Christs *unwillingness* to be *yours*; or at least from the uncertainty of his willingness; these have all a sufficient Remedy in the general extent and tenour of the New Covenant. Can you doubt whether God be willing to give you Christ and Life, when he hath given them already? even by a Deed of Guift under his hand, and by

by a Law of Grace, 1 *Joh.*5.10,11,12.

Object. But yet all are not Pardoned, nor poſſeſſed of Chriſt, and ſo ſaved.

Anſw. I told you, that is becauſe they *will* not: ſo that (I pray you mark it well) God hath in theſe four Means before mentioned, given even to the Graceleſs ſo much Ground of Comfort, that nothing but [their unwillingneſs to have Chriſt,] is left to be their terror. For though ſin be not Actually Remitted to them, yet is it Conditionally Remitted, *viz.* if they will but accept of Chriſt offered them. Will you remember this, when your doubts are greateſt, and you conclude that certainly Chriſts is not yours, becauſe you have no true Grace: Suppoſe it be true: Yet ſtill know that Chriſt may be yours if you will, and when you will. This Comfort you may have when you can finde no Evidences of true Grace in your ſelf. So much for that Direction.

DIRE-

DIRECTION VIII.

8. The next thing that you have to do, for building up a stable Comfort, and setling your Conscience in a solid Peace, is this; Be sure to get and keep a right Understanding of the Nature of Saving Faith.

As you must have right thoughts of the Covenant of Grace (of which before,) the want whereof doth puzzle and confound very many Christians; so you must be sure to have right thoughts of the Condition of the Covenant. For indeed that Grace which causeth you to perform this Condition, is your first special saving Grace, which you may take as a certain evidence of your Justification: And this Condition is the very link which conjoyneth all the General foregoing Grace to all the rest of the following special Grace. The Scripture is so full and plain in Assuring pardon and salvation to all true Believers, that if you can but be sure that you are a Believer, you need not make any doubt of your interest in Christ and

your salvation. Seeing therefore that all the question will be, Whether you have true Faith? Whether you do perform the Condition of the new Covenant? (For all other doubts God hath given you sufficient ground to resolve, as is said,) how much then doth it concern you, to have a right understanding of the Nature of this Faith? Which that you may have let me tell you briefly what it is. Mans soul hath two faculties, Understanding and Will: Accordingly the Objects of mans soul (all Beings which it is to Receive) have two Modifications; Truth and Goodness (as those to be Avoided are Evil.) Accordingly Gods Word or Gospel hath two parts; the Revelation of Truth, and the Offer and Promise of some Good. This offered Good is principally and immediatly Christ himself, to be joyned to us by Covenant as our head and husband: The secondary consequential Good, is Pardon, Justification, Reconciliation, Adoption, further Sanctification and Glorification, which are all offered with Christ. By this you may see what saving Faith is: It is first a Believing that the Gospel is True; and then an Accepting of Christ therein offered to us, with his benefits: or a consenting that he be ours and we be his; which is nothing but a *true willingness to have an offered*

offered Christ. Remember this well; that you may make use of it, when you are in doubt of the truth of your Faith. Thousands of poor souls have been in the dark, and unable to see themselves to be Believers, meerly for want of knowing what saving Faith is. And, it is a truth that cannot be hid, that Divines who should have taught them better, have been the great cause of their errour; not well and cleerly understanding this themselves. It is a shamefull confession: but the world knoweth it already. The Papists place almost all in the meer Assent of the Understanding. Our great Reformers made it to be either an Assurance of the pardon of our own sins; or a strong perswasion of their pardon, excluding doubting; or (the moderatest) a perswasion of our particular pardon, though mixt with some doubting: The Antinomians strike in with them, and say the same: Hence even the greatest of our Divines (*Chamier, Polanus, Twisse*, &c.) conclude, that Justification and Remission go before faith (a desperate errour) because the Act doth alway suppose its object: For they thought that Remission already past, was the object of Justifying Faith: supposing faith to be nothing else but a Belief that we are pardoned: Yea ordinarily, it hath been taught in the writings

of our greateſt refuters of the Papiſts, That this Belief is properly a Divine faith, or the Belief of a Divine Teſtimony, as is the Believing of any Propoſition written in the Scriture (a foul error which I have confuted in my book of *Reſt, Part.*3. *Chap.*7.) Moſt of late have come neerer the truth, and affirmed Juſtifying Faith to conſiſt in Affiance, or Recumbency, or Reſting on Chriſt for ſalvation. No doubt this is one Act of Juſtifying faith; but not that which a poor troubled ſoul ſhould firſt ſearch after and try it ſelf by (except by *Affiance*, any ſhould mean as *Ameſius* doth, *Election of Chriſt*: and then it is the ſame act which I am aſſerting; but very unfitly expreſt.) For 1. Affiance is not the Principal act, nor that wherein the very life of Juſtifying faith doth conſiſt: but only an imperate following act, and an effect of the vital act (which is Conſent, or Willing, or Accepting Chriſt offered:) for it lyeth mainly in that which we call the ſenſitive part, or the Paſſions of the ſoul. 2. It is therefore leſſe conſtant, and ſo unfitter to try by: For many a poor ſoul that knowes it ſelf unfeignedly willing to have Chriſt, yet feeleth not a Reſting on him or Truſting in him, and therefore crys out, O I cannot believe; and think they have no Faith. For Recumbency, Affiance,

or

or Reſting on Chriſt, implieth that eaſing of themſelves, or caſting off their fears, or doubts, or cares, which true believers do not alwayes finde. Many a poor ſoul complains, O I cannot reſt on Chriſt; I cannot truſt him! who yet would have him to be their Lord and Saviour, and can eaſily be convinced of their willingneſs. 3. Beſides, Affiance is not the Adequate act of faith, ſuited to the object in that fullneſs as it muſt be Received: but Willingneſs, or Acceptance, is, Chriſt is Reſted on only for our ſelves as our Deliverer: but he is Accepted alſo for Himſelf as our Lord and Maſter. The full proof of theſe, I have performed in other Writings, and oft in your hearing in publike, and therefore omit them now. Be ſure then to fix this truth deep in your minde. That Juſtifying faith is not an Aſſurance of our Juſtification, no nor a perſwaſion or belief that we are Juſtified or pardoned, or that Chriſt died more for us then for others; nor yet is Affiance or Reſting on Chriſt the vital, principal, certain, conſtant full act: but it is the Underſtandings belief of the truth of the Goſpel, and the Will's Acceptance of Chriſt and Life offered to us therein: which Acceptance is but the hearty Conſent or Willingneſs that he be yours and you his. This is the Faith

which must Justifie and save you.

Object. But 1. May not wicked men be Willing to have Christ? 2. And do not you oft tell us that Justifying faith comprehendeth Love to Christ and Thankfulness, and that it receiveth him as a Lord to be obeyed, as well as a Deliverer? and that Repentance and sincere Obedience, are parts of the Condition of the new Covenant?

Answ. I will give as brief a touch now on these as may be, because I have handled them in fitter places. 1. Wicked men are willing to have Remission, Justification and freedom from hell (for no man can be willing to be unpardoned or to be damned:) But they are not willing to have Christ himself in that nature and office which he must be Accepted; that is, *As a holy Head and Husband, to save them both from the Guilt, and Power, and all defilement and abode of sin, and to Rule them by his Law, and Guide them by his Spirit, and to make them happy by bringing them to God, that being without sin, they may be perfectly Pleasing and Amiable in his sight, and enjoy him for ever.* Thus is Christ offered, and thus to be accepted of all that will be saved; and thus no wicked man will accept him (but when he ceaseth to be wicked.) 2. (To cut all the rest short, in a word, I say, That) in this fore-described Willingness

or

or Acceptance, Repentance, Love, Thankfulneſs, Reſolution to obey, are all contained, or neerly implyed, as I have elſewhere manifeſted; ſo that the Heart of ſaving faith, is this Acceptance of Chriſt, or Willingneſs to have him to Juſtifie, Sanctifie, Guide and Govern you. Finde but this Willingneſs, and you finde all the reſt, whether you expreſly ſee them or not. So much for that Direction.

DIRECTION IX.

9. *Having thus far proceeded, in diſcovering and improving the General Grounds of Comfort, and then in diſcovering the Nature of Faith, which gives you Right to the ſpecial Mercies of the Covenant, following it; Your next work muſt be,* To perform this Condition by actual Believing.

YOur ſoul ſtands in extreme need of a Saviour: God offereth you a Saviour in the Goſpel, what then have you next to do, but Accept him? Believe that this offer is general, and therefore to you: and that

Christ is not set to sale, nor doth God require you to bring a Price in your hand; but only heartily and thankfully to Accept of what he freely giveth you. This must be done before you fall on trying your Graces to get Assurance: for you must have Grace, before you can discover it: and this is the first proper special saving Grace (as it comprizeth that knowledge and Assent which necessarily go before it.) This is not only the method for those that yet never believed, but also for them that have lost the sense of their faith, and so the sight of their evidence. Believe again, that you may know you do believe; or at least may possesse an Accepted Saviour. When God in the Gospel bids you, Take Jesus Christ, and beseecheth you to be reconciled to him; what will you say to him? If your heart answer; *Lord I am willing, I will Accept of Christ and be thankfull*; why, then the match is made between Christ and you: and the marriage Covenant is truly entered, which none can dissolve. If Christ were not first willing, he would not be the suitor and make the motion: and if he be willing, and you be willing, what can break the match? If you will say, *I cannot believe*, if you understand what you say, either you mean that you cannot believe the Gospel is true; or else that you

you cannot be willing that Christ should be yours. If it be the former, and you speak truly, then you are a flat Infidel (yet many temptations to doubt of the truth of Scripture, a true believer may have, yea and actual doubtings; but his faith prevaileth and is victorious over them:) But if you really doubt whether the Gospel be true, use Gods means for the discovery of its truth. Read what I have written in the second part of my book of *Rest*: I will undertake now more confidently then ever I did, to prove the truth of Scripture, by plain, full, undeniable force of Reason. But I suppose this is none of your case. If therefore when you say, that you cannot believe, you mean that you cannot Accept an offered Christ, or be willing to have him: then I demand, 1. What is your reason? the Will is lead by the Reason of the Understanding. If you be not willing, there is something that perswades you to be unwilling. This Reason must be from something reall, or else upon a mistake, upon supposal of something that is not in being. If it be upon mistake, either it is that you be not convinced of Christs willingness to be yours; and if you thought he did consent, you would consent willingly: If this be it, you do truly believe while you think you do not: for you do consent (and

that's all on your part to make the match) and Christ doth certainly consent, though you do not understand it: In this case it concerneth you, to understand better the extent of the new Covenant, and then you will be past doubt of the willingness of Christ, and see that wherever the match breaks, it is only for want of consent in men; for Christ is the first suitor, and hath long ago in the Covenant proclaimed his consent, to be the Head and Husband of every sinner, on condition they will but consent to be his.

If your mistake be from any false apprehension of the Nature of Christ, as if he were not a sufficient Saviour, or were such an enemy to your comfort that he would do you more hurt then good; if these mistakes are prevalent, then you do not know Christ, and therefore must presently better study him in the Gospel, till you have prevailed over such ignorant and blasphemous conceits (but none of this I suppose is your case.)

If then the reason why you say, you cannot believe, be from any thing that is really in Christ (and not upon mistake,) then it must be either from some dislike of his saving work, by which he would pardon you, and save you from damnation (but that is impossible;

impossible; for you cannot be willing to be damned or unpardoned, till you lose your Reason:) Or else it is from a dislike of his work of sanctification, by which he would cleanse your heart and life, by saving you from your sinfull nature and actions: some grudgings against Christs holy and undefiled Laws and wayes will be in the best, while there is that flesh in them which lusteth against the Spirit, so that they cannot do the things they would: But if truly you have such a dislike of a sinless condition, through the love of any sin or creature, that you cannot be willing to have Christ to cure you and cleanse you from that sin, and make you holy, I say, if this be true, in a prevailing degree, so that if Christ and Holiness were offered you, you would not Accept them, then it is certain you have not true faith. And in this case it is easie to discern, that your first work lyeth not in getting Comfort or ease to your troubled minde, but in getting better conceits of Christ and a holy state and life, that so you may be willing of Christ as Christ is of you, and so become a true believer. And here I would not leave you at that losse as some do, as if there were nothing for you th do for the getting of faith: for certainly God hath prescribed you Means for that end. *Faith cometh by hear-*

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ing, and hearing by the word of God preached. *Rom.* 10. 17. 1. Therefore see that you wait diligently on this Ordinance of God. Read the Scriptures daily; and search them, to see whether you may not there finde that Holiness is better then sin. 2. And (however some seducers may tell you, that wicked men ought not to pray, yet) be sure that you lye on your knees before God, and importunately beg that he would open your eyes and change your heart, and shew you so far the evil of sin, and the want and worth of Christ and holiness, that you may be unfainedly glad to Accept his offer.

Object. But the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.

Answ. 1. You must distinguish between wicked men as actually wicked and going on in the prosecution of their wickedness; and wicked men as they have some good in them, or are doing some good, or are attempting a return to God. 2. You must distinguish between real Prayer and seeming prayer. 3. You must distinguish between full Acceptance of Prayer, when God delighteth in them, and an Acceptance only to some particular end, not intimating the Acceptance of the person with his prayer: And between Acceptance fully Promised (as certain) and Acceptance but half-promised (as Probable)

Probable:) And upon these distinctions I shall answer your objection in the Conclusions.

1. When wicked men pray God to prosper them in their wickedness, yea or to pardon them while they intend to go on in it, and so to give them an indulgence in sin; or when they think with a few prayers for some Good which they can endure, to put by that Holiness which they cannot endure, and so to make a cloak for their rebellion, these prayers are all an abomination to the Lord.

2. When men use the words of a Prayer without the desire of the thing asked, this is no Prayer, but equivocally so called, as a carkasse is a man: and therefore no wonder if God abhor that Prayer, which truly is no Prayer.

3. God hath not made a full Promise, ascertaining any wicked man, while wicked, that he will hear his Prayer: for all such Promises are made to Believers.

4. God doth never so hear an unbelievers Prayer, as to accept his person with his Prayer, or to take a complacency in them. So much for the Negative.

Now for the Affirmative I add: 1. Prayer is a duty which God enjoyned even wicked men (I could prove it by a hundred Scripture texts.) 2. There

2. There may be some good desires in unbelievers, which they may express in prayer, and these God may so far hear as to grant them, as he did in part to *Ahab*.

3. An unbeliever may lye under preparing Grace, and be on his way in returning towards God, though yet he be not come to saving faith; and in this state he may have many good desires, and such Prayers as God will hear.

4. Though God have not flatly engaged himself to unbelievers, so as to give them a certainty of hearing their prayers, and giving them true Grace on the improvement of their naturals, yet he hath not only appointed them this and other means to get Grace, but also given them half promises, or strong probabilities of speeding, so much as may be a sufficient encouragement to any such sinner to call on God and use his Means. For as he appointeth not any vain Means to man, so no man can name that man who did improve his naturals to the utmost, and in particular, sought God in prayer so far as a natural man may do, who yet mist of Grace and was rejected (This is the true mean between Pelagianisme and Antinomianisme in this point.)

5. When God calls unbelievers to Prayer, he withall calls them to Believe: and when he

he works their heart to Prayer by that call, he usually withall works them to Believe, or at least towards believing. If he that was unwilling to have Christ, do pray God to make him willing, it is a beginning of willingness already, and the way to get more willingness. In Prayer God useth to give in the thing prayed for, of this kinde.

6. Prayer is the souls motion Godward: and to say an unbeleever should not pray, is to say he should not turn to God: who yet saith to the wicked, *Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is neer; Let the wicked forsake his way*, &c. *Isa.*55.6,7.

7. Prayer hath two parts, Desire is the soul of it, and Expression is the body: the soul can live separated from the body, but so cannot the body separated from the soul: so can Desire without Expression, but not Expression without Desire. When our blind Antinomians (the great subverters of the Gospel, more then the Law) do rail against Ministers for perswading wicked men to Pray, they are against us for perswading men to Desire that they pray for: Prayer having Desire for its soul. And do not those men deserve to be exterminated the Churches and societies of the Saints, who dare say to a wicked unbeliever, *Desire not Faith: Desire not to*

leave

leave thy wickedneſs: Deſire not Grace, or Chriſt, or God: and that will proclaim abroad the world (as I have oft heard them with zealous reproaches,) that our Miniſters are Legaliſts, Seducers, Ignorant of the Myſteries of the Goſpel, becauſe they perſwade poor ſinners to Pray for Faith, Grace, and Chriſt; that is, to Deſire theſe, and to expreſs their Deſires; which in effect is to perſwade them to Repent, Believe and turn to God. Indeed if theſe blind Seducers had ever heard our Miniſters perſwading wicked men to Diſſemble and lye to God, and ask Faith, Grace and Chriſt with their tongues, but not Deſire them in their hearts, then had they ſufficient grounds for their reviling language (but I have been too long on this.) I may therefore boldly conclude, that they that finde themſelves unbelievers, that is, unwilling to have Chriſt to deliver them from ſin, muſt uſe this ſecond Means to get faith, even earneſt frequent Prayer for it, to God.

3. Let ſuch alſo ſee that they avoid wicked ſeducing company and occaſions of ſin: and be ſure that they keep company with men fearing God, eſpecially joyning with them in their holy duties.

4. Laſtly, Let ſuch be ſure that they uſe that Reaſon which God hath given them, to conſider frequently, retiredly, ſeriouſly of the

the vanity of all those things that steal away their hearts from Christ; and of the excellency of Holiness, and how blessed a state it is, to have nothing in us in heart or life that is displeasing to God, but to be such as he taketh full delight in; also of the certainty of the damnation of unbeleevers, and the intollerableness of their torments; and of the certainty and unconceivable greatness of Believers everlasting Happiness. If wicked unbelievers would but do what they can in daily, serious, deep considering of these things and the like, they would have no cause to despair of obtaining Faith and Sanctification. Believing is a Rational Act: God bids you not to Believe any thing without Reason, nor to Accept or Consent to any thing without full Reason to cause you to consent. Think then often and soberly of those Reasons that should move you to Consent, and of the vanity of these that hinder you from Consenting, and this is Gods way for you to obtain Faith or Consent.

Remember then that when you have understood and improved General grounds of Comfort (nay before you can come to any full improvement of them,) your next business is to Believe: to Consent to the Match with Christ, and to Take him for your Lord and Saviour: And this Duty must be lookt to

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and performed, before you look after special Comfort. But I said somewhat of this before under the sixth Head, and therefore will say no more now.

DIRECTION X.

10. *When you have gone thus far, your Soul is safe and you are past your greatest Dangers, though yet you are not past your Fears: Your next work therefore for Peace and Comfort is this,* To Review and take Notice of your own Faith, and thence to gather Assurance of the Certainty of your Justification, and Adoption, and right to Glory.

THe summe of this Direction lyeth in these things:

1. See that you do not content your self with the forementioned general Comforts, without looking after Assurance and special Comforts. The folly of this I have manifested in the third part of my book of Rest, about self-examination.

2. See that you dream not of finding Assu-

rance

rance and ſpecial Comfort from meer general Grounds: This is the deluſion of many Antinomians, and of moſt of our prophane people (who I finde are commonly of the Antinomian faith, naturally without teaching.) For men to conclude that they ſhall certainly be ſaved, meerly becauſe God is Mercifull, or Chriſt is tender-hearted to ſinners, and would not that any ſhould periſh, but all ſhould come to Repentance, or becauſe God delights not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he Repent and live; or becauſe Chriſt died for them; or becauſe God hath given Chriſt and Life in the Goſpel to all on Condition of believing; theſe are all but meer deluſions. Much Comfort, as I have ſhewed you, may be gathered from theſe Generals: but no Certainty of Salvation, or ſpecial Comfort can be gathered from them alone.

3. See that you reject the Antinomian doctrine or dotage, which would teach you to reject the tryal and judging of your ſtate by ſignes of Grace in your ſelf, and tell you that it is only the Spirit that muſt Aſſure, by witneſſing your Adoption. I will further define this Caution, when I have added the reſt.

4. And on the other extream, do not run to Marks *unſeaſonably*, but in the order here laid down.

5. Nor

5. Nor do not truſt to unſafe Marks.

6. And therefore do not look at too many; for the true ones, are but few. I do but name theſe things to you, becauſe I have fullyer handled them in my book of Reſt, whether I muſt refer you. And ſo I return to the third Caution.

I have in the forementioned Book told you, what the Office of the Spirit is in Aſſuring us, and what the uſe of Marks are. The Spirit witneſſeth firſt Objectively, and ſo the Spirit and Marks are all one. For it is the Spirit dwelling in us that is the witneſs or proof that we are Gods ſons: for he that hath not his Spirit is none of his: and the Spirit is not diſcerned by us in its eſſence, but in its workings: and therefore, to diſcern theſe workings is to diſcern the Spirit: and theſe workings are the Marks that we ſpeak of: ſo that the Spirit witneſſeth our ſonſhip, as a reaſonable ſoul witneſſeth that you are a man and not a beaſt. You find by the Acts of Reaſon that you have a Reaſonable ſoul, and then you know that having a Reaſonable ſoul, you are certainly a man: So you finde by the works or fruits of the Spirit, that you have the Spirit, (that is, by Marks: and *Paul* enumerates the fruits of the Spirit to that end) and then by finding that you have the Spirit, you may certainly know that you are the

the child of God. 2. Alſo, as the Reaſonable ſoul is its own diſcerner by the help of the body (while it is in it) and ſo witneſſeth our Humanity effectively as well as objectively (but firſt in order objectively and next effectively :) ſo doth the Spirit effectively diſcover it ſelf to the ſoul, by illuminating us to diſcern it, and exciting us to ſearch, and giving us that ſpiritual taſt and feeling of its workings, and ſo of its preſence, by which it is beſt known. But ſtill it witneſſeth objectively firſt; and its effective witneſſing, is but the cauſing us to diſcern its objective witneſs. Or (to ſpeak more plainly,) The Spirit witneſſeth firſt and principally by giving us thoſe Graces and workings which are our Marks; and then ſecondly, by helping us to finde and feel thoſe workings or Marks in our ſelves; and then laſtly by raiſing Comforts in the ſoul upon that diſcovery. Take heed therefore of expecting any ſuch inward witneſs of the Spirit, as ſome expect, *viz.* a diſcovery of your Adoption directly without firſt diſcovering the ſignes of it within you; as if by an inward voice he ſhould ſay to you, Thou art a childe of God, and thy ſins are pardoned.

This that I deſcribed to you, is the true witneſs of the Spirit. This miſtake is ſo dangerous, that I had thought to have made it a

peculiar

peculiar Direction by it self to warn you of it: but now I have gone so far I will dispatch it here. Two dangerous consequents I finde do follow this unwarrantable expectation of the first immediate efficient Revelation that we are Adopted.

1. Some poor souls have languished in doubtings and trouble of minde almost all their daies, in expectation of such a kinde of witness as the Spirit useth not to give: when in the mean time they have other sufficient means of Comfort, and knew not how to improve them; yea they had the true witness of the Spirit in his inhabitation and holy workings, and did not know it; but run as *Samuel* did to *Eli*, not knowing the voice of God: and look for the Spirits testimony when they had it, as the Jews for *Elias* and the Messias.

2. Others do more dangerously erre, by taking the strong conceit of their own phantasie for the witness of the Spirit. As soon as they do but entertain the opinion that it must be such a witness of the Spirit, without the use of Marks, that must Assure men of their Adoption, presently they are confident that they have that witness themselves. It is scarce likely to be Gods Spirit that is so ready upon the meer change of an opinion: The devil useth to do as much to cherish

presumption,

presumption, as to destroy true faith and Assurance. It is a shrewd signe that our perswasions of our truth of Grace is a delusion, when we finde the devil a friend to it, and helping it on: and it is a probable signe it is a good perswasion, when we finde the devil an enemy to it, and still troubling us, and endeavouring our disquiet.

And here I remember the scruple that troubleth some about the spirit of bondage, and the spirit of Adoption. But you must understand that by the spirit of bondage, is meant, that spirit, and those operations on the soul which the Law of Works did naturally beget in those that were under it; which was, to be partly in bondage to a task of Ceremonious duties, and partly to the Curse, and obligation to Punishment for disobedience, without any Power to Justifie. They were said therefore to be in bondage to the Law; and the Law was said to be a Yoak which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear, Act. 15.

And by the spirit of Adoption is meant, 1. That spirit, or those qualifications and workings in their souls, which by the Gospel God giveth only to his sons: 2. And which raise in us some child-like affections to God, inclining us in all our wants to run to him in Prayer as to a Father, and to make our moan

to

to him, and open our griefs, and cry for redress, and look to him and depend on him as a childe on the father. This spirit of Adoption you may have, and yet not be certain of Gods special Love to you. The knowledge only of his general Goodness and Mercy, may be a means to raise in you true childlike affections. You may know God to have fatherly inclinations to you, and yet doubt whether he will use you as a childe, for want of Assurance of your own sincerity. And you may hope God is your father, when yet you may apprehend him to be a displeased angry father, and so he may be more your terror then your comfort. Are not you ready in most of your fears, and doubts, and troubles, to go to God before all other for relief? and doth not your heart sigh and groan to him when you can scarcely speak? Doth not your troubled spirit there finde its first vent? and say, *Lord, kill me not: forsake me not: my life is in thy hands: O soften this hard heart, make this carnal minde more spiritual! O be not such a stranger to my soul! Woe to me that I am so ignorant of thee! so disaffected to thee! so backward and disinclined to holy communion with thee! Woe to me that I can take no more pleasure in thee! and am so mindless and disregardfull of thee! O that thou wouldst stir up in me more lively desires and*

Workings of my ſoul toward thee! and ſuffer me not to lye at ſuch a diſtance from thee. Are not ſuch as theſe the breathings of your ſpirit! why theſe are child-like breathings after God! this is crying *Abba, Father.* This is the work of the ſpirit of Adoption, even when you fear God will caſt you off. You much miſtake (and thoſe that tell you ſo,) if you think that the ſpirit of Adoption lieth only in a perſwaſion that you are Gods childe, or that you may not have the ſpirit of Adoption without ſuch a perſwaſion of Gods Adopting you. For God may Adopt you, and give you that ſpirit which he gives only to his children, and poſſeſs you with true filial affections towards him, before ever you know your ſelf to be Adopted; much more, though you may have frequent returning doubts of your Adoption.

Having thus ſhewed you how far you may expect the Witneſs of the Spirit, and how far you may and muſt make uſe of Marks, and Qualifications or Actions of your own, for the obtaining of Aſſurance and ſetled Peace; I ſhall add an Anſwer to the Principal Objections of the Antinomians againſt this.

Object. (They ſay) This is to draw men from Chriſt to themſelves, and from the Gospel to the Law: to lay their Comforts and

build their Peace upon any thing in themselves, is to forsake Christ and make themselves their own Saviours: and those Teachers that perswade them to this, are Teachers of the Law, and false Prophets, who draw men from Christ to themselves. All our own Righteousnes is as a menstruous cloth, and our best works are sin, and therefore we may not take up our Assurance or Comforts from them. We shall be alwayes at uncertainties, and at a loss, or unconstant, up and down in our Comforts, as long as we take them from any signes in our selves. Also our own Graces are Imperfect, and therefore unfit to be the Evidences for our Assurance.

Answ. Because I am not now purposely confuting the Antinomians, but only forearming you against their assaults; I shall not therefore give you half that I should otherwise say, for the Explication of this Point, and the Confutation of their Errors; but only so much as is necessary to your preservation. Which I do, because they pretend to be the only Preachers of free Grace, and the only right Comforters of troubled Consciences; and because they have written so many books to that end, which if they fall into your hands may seem so specious, as that you may need some preservative. I suppose you remember

what I have taught you so oft, concerning the difference of the Law of Works, and the Law or Covenant of Grace, with their different Conditions. Upon which supposition I explicate the point thus. 1. No man may look at his own Graces or Duties as his Legal Righteousness; that is, such as for which the Law of Works will pronounce him Righteous. 2. Nor yet may he take them for part of his Legal Righteousness, in conjunction with Christs Righteousness, as the other part: but here we must go wholly out of our selves, and deny and disclaim all such Righteousness of our own. We have no Works, which make the Reward to be not of Grace but of Debt. 3. We must not once think that our Graces, Duties or sufferings, can make satisfaction to Gods Justice for our sin and unrighteousness: nor yet that they are any part of that satisfaction. Here we ascribe all to Christ who is the only Sacrifice and Ransome. 4. Nor must we think that our Duties or Graces are properly Meritorious: this also is to be left as the sole honour of Christ. 5. Yet that we may and must raise our Assurance and Comforts from our own Graces and Duties, shall appear in these clear Reasons following, which shew also the Grounds on which we may do it.

1. Pardon, Justification and Adoption,

and Salvation, are all Given to us in the Gospel only Conditionally (if we believe:) and the Condition is an act, or rather several acts of our own. Now till the Condition be performed, no man can have any Certainty that the Benefit shall be his: nor can he by any other means (ordinarily) be certain of the Benefit, but by that which ascertaineth him that he hath performed the Condition. God saith, *He that Believeth shall be saved*: No man can know then that he shall be saved till he first know that he Believeth. Else he should know either contrary to that which is written, or more then that which is written: And Justification and Adoption should be given some other way then by the Gospel Promise (for that Promise giveth them only Conditionally, and so suspendeth the actual right, upon the performance of the Condition:) But if any can shew any other way by which God maketh over pardon and Adoption, besides the Gospel promise, let them do it; but I will not promise suddenly to believe them; for it was never yet shewed as I know of. Also, if men must not look at their own performance of the Condition, to prove their right to the benefit, then either all or none must believe that they have that right. For the Promise saith, *He that Believeth shall be saved*. And this is a promise of Life conditionally

conditionally to all. If all must believe that they shall be saved, then most of the world must believe a lye. If the true believer may not therefore conclude that he shall be saved, because he performeth the condition of the promise, then no man may believe it. And for that absolute Promise of the new Heart, no man can, or may believe that it is his, till he have that new heart which it promiseth; that is, till it be fulfilled: For there is no Mark by which a man can know whether that Promise belong to him or no, beforehand: and if all should believe that it belongs to them, most would finde it false.

2. God hath not Redeemed us by his Son to be Lawless: To be without Law is to be without Government. We are without *the Law* (that is, of Works, or of *Moses*,) but not without *Law*; Jesus Christ is our Ruler, and he hath made us a Law of Grace; an easie yoak, and commands that are not grievous. This Law hath Precepts, Promises and threats: it must needs be either obeyed or disobeyed: and so the pænalty must be due or not due; and the Reward due or not due. He that performs the condition, and so to whom the reward is due and not the pænalty, is Righteous in the sense of this Law. As when we are accused to be sinners against the Law of Works, and so to deserve the pænalty

of that Law, we must confess all, and plead the Righteousness of Christs satisfaction, for our Justification: so when we are accused to be final unbelievers or impenitent, and so not to have performed the conditions of the new Covenant, we must be Justified by our own Faith and Repentance, the performance of that condition; and must plead, Not guilty: And so far our own Acts are our Evangelical Righteousness; and that of such necessity, that without it no man can have part in Christs Righteousness, nor be saved. I would desire any man else to tell me, what else he will plead at Judgement, when the Accuser chargeth him (or if he do so charge him) with final unbelief: will he confess it, and say, *Christ hath Believed and Repented for me*: that is as much as to say, *Christ was a Believer for Infidels, that he might save Infidels*: All false. If he will not say thus (and lying will do no good) then must he plead his own Believing and Repenting as his Righteousness in opposition to that Accusation. And if it be of such use then, and be called a hundred times in Scripture, *our Righteousness*, and we Righteous for it, then doubtless we may accordingly try by it now, whether we shall then be able to come off and be Justified, or no; and so may build our comfort on it.

3. Con

3. Conſcience is a Witneſs and Judge within us; and doth as under God Accuſe and Condemn, or Excuſe and Acquit: Now if Conſcience muſt abſolve us only ſo far as we are Innocent, or do well, or are qualified with Grace; then it is impoſſible but theſe our Qualifications and Actions ſhould be ſome ground of our Comfort. See *Acts* 24.16. and 23.1. *Rom.*2.15,16.

4. Thoſe which are our Graces and Works, as we are the Subjects and Agents, are the Graces and Works of God, of Chriſt, of the holy Ghoſt dwelling in us. If therefore we may not Rejoice in our own Works, or Graces, then we may not Rejoice in the Works or Guifts of God, Chriſt or the holy Ghoſt. And

5. Our Graces are the ſpiritual Life or Health of the ſoul, and our holy actions are the vital operations. Now Life and Health are neceſſary Rejoycing, delighting things of themſelves: and vital Actions, are neceſſarily pleaſant and delectable.

6. Our Graces and holy Actions muſt needs Rejoice us in reſpect of their Objects. For the object of our Love, Truſt, Hope, Meditation, Prayer, Conference, *&c.* is God himſelf, and the Lord Jeſus, and the Joyes of Heaven. And how can ſuch Actions chooſe but Rejoice us!

7. Yea Rejoicing it ſelf, and Delighting our ſelves in God, is not only one part of our Duty, but that great Duty wherein lieth the height of our Chriſtianity: And how vain a ſpeech is it, to ſay, that we may not take up our Comforts from our own works, nor Rejoice in any thing of our own; when even Rejoicing it ſelf, and Delighting, and Comforting our ſelves is one part of our Duty?

8. As God in Chriſt is the chief object and ground of our Comfort (ſo that we muſt Rejoice in nothing but God, and the Croſs of Chriſt, in that kinde, or in coordination with them,) ſo it is the office of every Grace and holy Work, and Ordinance, and Means, to be ſubſervient to Chriſt, either for the attaining of Chriſt, or applying his merits, or they are the effects of his merits. Now if we muſt Love and Rejoice in Chriſt principally, then muſt we needs Love and Rejoice in all thoſe things that ſtand in a neceſſary ſubordination to him, in their places. And therefore to ſay, *We muſt Rejoice in Chriſt only, and therefore not in any Graces or Duties of our own*; is as wiſe as if a wife ſhould caſt her husbands cloathes and meat out of doors, and ſay, You charged me to admit none into my chamber but your ſelf: Or as if a Phyſitian, having told his patients, *I will cure you, if you will truſt me only for the cure*; thereupon

thereupon the Patients ſhould caſt away his Medicines, and ſhut the doors againſt his ſervants and Apothecary and ſay, *We muſt truſt none but the Phyſitian.*

9. All the failings of our Duties are pardoned, and they Accepted in Chriſt; and therefore we may Rejoice in them.

10. Our Duties have a double tendency to our ſalvation: 1. As the Condition to which God hath promiſed it as the Crown and Reward (in a hundred texts of Scripture;) And may we not Comfort our ſelves in that which God promiſeth Heaven to? 2. As a Natural means to our obedience, and further perfection (as Watchfulneſs, Meditation, *&c.* tend to deſtroy ſin:) as *Paul* ſaith to *Timothy*, *Take heed to thy ſelf and to thy Doctrine, and in ſo doing thou ſhalt both ſave thy ſelf and them that hear thee*, 1 *Tim.*4.16. And may we not take Comfort in that which tends to ſave our own and our brethrens ſouls?

11. We ſhall be Judged according to our Works: therefore we muſt judge our ſelves according to our Works; and ſo muſt judge our ſtate good or bad according to our works: for can man judge by a righter way then God will? At leaſt is it not lawfull for man to judge as God doth?

12. We muſt judge of others in probability

according to their external works, even the tree by the fruits: therefore we must judge of our selves in certainty according to our internal and external works together (which we may certainly know.)

13. If we may not Rejoice in any of our Graces, then we may not be Thankfull for them: for Thanks is accompanied with Joy: but we must be Thankfull.

14. If we may not Rejoice in our Duties, we may not Repent or sorrow for the neglect of them; and if we may not Rejoice in our Graces, we may not lament the want of them (for these are as the two ends of the balance, that one goes down when the other goes up; or as day and night, light and darkness.) But the consequent is intollerable.

15. This would overthrow all Religion. For what a man cannot Rejoice in, he cannot Love, he cannot esteem, regard, be carefull to obtain, be fearfull of losing, *&c.*

16. God delighteth in our Graces and holy Duties, and is well pleased with them: and therefore it is lawfull and needfull that we do as God doth, *Jer.*9.24. *Heb.*11.5. *Abels* sacrifice by faith obtained testimony that he pleased God, *Heb.*13.16. *To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifice*

ſacrifice God is well pleaſed.

17. The Saints of God have not only tried themſelves by their Graces and Duties, and commanded others to try by them, but have Gloried and Rejoiced in their Duties and ſufferings, 2 *Cor.*1.12. *This is our Rejoicing, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have had our converſation among you.* Acts 5.41. *They gloried that they were counted worthy to ſuffer for Chriſt,* Rom.15.17. *I have therefore whereof I may glory in Jeſus Chriſt, in thoſe things which pertain to God.* Rom.5.3. *We glory in tribulation,*&c. 2 *Cor.*12.6, 9. *Though I ſhould deſire to glory, I ſhould not be a fool: I glory in mine infirmities.* Jer.9.24. *Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me.* 1 Cor.9.15. *I had rather die then any ſhould make my glorying void.* Gal.6.4. *Let every man prove his own work, ſo ſhall he have Rejoicing in himſelf alone, and not in another.*

18. Scripture nameth many of our own Graces and Duties, as the certain Marks of our Juſtification and right to Glory: Even Chriſt with his own mouth gives us many: *Matth.*6.21. *Where your treaſure is, there will your heart be alſo.* Joh.3.20. *He that doth evil hateth the light,*&c. *but he that doth good cometh to the light,that,*&c. *Mat.*5.

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is full of such. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, the pure in heart*, &c.

19. We may Rejoice in other mens good Works and Graces (and do, if we be true Christians,) therefore in our own.

20. We may Rejoice in Gods outward Mercies; therefore much more in inward, and such as accompany salvation. All these Arguments prove that we may take up our Comfort from our own Gracious Qualifications and Actions (not in opposition to Christ, but in subordination to him:) and most of them prove that we may fetch our Assurance of salvation from them, as undoubted Evidences thereof.

I have said the more in Answer to these Objections, 1. Because never any came with fairer pretences of exalting Christ, and maintaining the honour of his Righteousness and free Grace, and of denying our selves and our own Righteousness. 2. And yet few Doctrines more dishonour Christ, and destroy the very substance of all Religion. Even as if a man should cry down him that would Praise and commend Obedience to the King, and say, You must Praise nothing but the King: so do these cry down our looking at and Rejoicing in our Love to Christ, and our Thankfulness to him, and our Obedience, and all under

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pretence of honouring him. Nay they will not have us Rejoice in one part of Christs salvation (his saving us from the power of sin, and his sanctifying us,) under pretence that we dishonour the other part of his salvation (his Justifying us.) If ever Satan transformed himself into an Angel of Light, and his Ministers into Ministers of Light, it is in the mistakes of the Antinomians: and no people in the world (except carnal Libertines, whom this doctrine fits to a hair) are in more danger of them, then poor doubting Christians under trouble of Conscience: specially if they be not judicious, and skill'd in the Doctrine of Christ. For the very pretence of extolling Christ and free Grace will take much with such: and any New-way will sometime seem to give them Comfort, upon the very novelty and sudden change.

Having thus proved that you may and must fetch your special Comfort and Assurance from Evidences, and that your first Evidence is your Faith, I shall open this fullier under the next Direction.

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DIRECTION XI.

11. *In the Trial of your State,* Be ſure that you make uſe of Infallible ſigns of Sincerity, and take not thoſe for certain which are not.

AND to that end remember what I ſaid before, that you muſt well underſtand wherein the Nature of ſaving Faith, and ſo of all ſaving Grace doth conſiſt. And when you underſtand this, write it down in two or three lines: and both at your firſt trial, and afterward when ever any doubts do drive you to a Review of your Evidences, ſtill have recourſe only to thoſe Signs. and try by them. What theſe Signs are, I have ſhewed you ſo fully in the forecited place in my book of *Reſt*, that I ſhall ſay but little now. Remember that Infallible ſigns are very few; and that whatſoever is made the condition of ſalvation, that is the moſt Infallible evidence of our ſalvation, and therefore the fitteſt Mark to try by: And therefore Faith in God the Father and the Redeemer, is the main Evidence. But becauſe I have elſewhere ſhewed you, that this Faith

Faith is comprehenſive of Love, Gratitude, Reſolution to Obey and Repentance; let me more particularly open it to help you in the Triall. To prove any Grace to be ſaving, it is neceſſary that you prove that ſalvation is fully promiſed to him that hath it. Now if you will know what it is that hath this promiſe; I will tell you, 1. As to the Object. 2. The Act. 3. The degree or modification of the Act. For all theſe three muſt be enquired after if you will get Aſſurance. 1. The Object is principally God and the Redeemer Chriſt: And ſecondarily the Benefits given by Chriſt: and under that, the means to attain the principal Benefits, *&c.* 2. The Act hath many Names drawn from Reſpective and Modall differences in the Object; as Faith, Deſire, Love, chooſing, Accepting, Receiving, Conſenting, *&c.* But properly all are compriſed in one word, *Willing*. The Underſtandings high eſtimation of God, and Chriſt, and Grace, is a Principal part of true ſaving Grace; but yet it is difficult and ſcarce poſſible to judge of your ſelf by it rightly, but only as it diſcovers it ſelf by prevailing with the Will. 3. The Degree of this Act muſt be ſuch, as ordinarily prevaileth againſt its contrary: I mean, both the contrary Object, and the contrary Act to the ſame Object. But becauſe I doubt School-

School-termes do obſcure my meaning to you (though they are neceſſary for exactneſs) I will expreſs the nature of ſaving Grace in two or three Marks as plain as I can.

1. *Are you heartily willing to take God for your Portion, and had you rather Live with him in Glory, in his favour and fulleſt Love, with a ſoul perfectly cleanſed from all ſin, and never more to offend him, Rejoicing with his Saints in his everlaſting praiſes; than to enjoy the delights of the fleſh on earth, in a way of ſin, and without the favour of God?*
2. *Are you heartily willing to take Jeſus Chriſt as he is offered in the Goſpel? that is, to be your only Saviour and Lord, to give you pardon by his bloudſhed, and to ſanctifie you by his Word and Spirit, and to govern you by his Laws?*

(Becauſe this General containeth and implieth ſeveral Particulars, I will expreſs them diſtinctly.)

Here it is ſuppoſed that you know this much following of the nature of his Laws: For to be Willing to be Ruled by his Laws in General, and utterly Unwilling when it comes to particulars, is no true Willingneſs or ſubjection. 1. You muſt know that his Laws reach both to heart and outward actions. 2. That they command a holy, ſpiri-

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tual, heavenly life. 3. That they command things ſo croſs and unpleaſing to the fleſh, that the fleſh will be ſtill murmuring and ſtriving againſt obedience: Particularly 1. They command things quite croſs to the *inclinations* of the fleſh: as to forgive Wrongs, to Love Enemies, to forbear Malice and Revenge, to reſtrain and mortifie Luſt and Paſſion; to abhor and mortifie Pride, and be low in our own eyes, and humble and meek in ſpirit. 2. They command things that croſs the *intereſt* of the fleſh and its inclination both together: I mean, which will deprive it of its enjoyments, and bring it to ſome ſuffering: As, to perform Duties even when they lay us open to diſgrace, and ſhame, and reproach in the world; and to deny our credit, rather then forſake Chriſt or our duty: to obey Chriſt in doing what he commandeth us, though it would hazard or certainly loſe our wealth, friends, liberty and life it ſelf; forſaking all, rather then to forſake him: to give to the poor, and other good uſes, and that liberally according to our abilities: to deny the fleſh all forbidden pleaſures, and make not proviſion to ſatisfie its luſts, but to crucifie the fleſh with the affections and luſts thereof: and in this combate to hold on to the end and to overcome. Theſe are the Laws of Chriſt; which you

must know, before you can determine whether you are indeed unfeignedly willing to obey them. Put therefore these further questions to your self, for the trial of your willingness to be ruled by Christ according to his Laws.

3. *Are you heartily Willing to live in the performance of those holy and spiritual Duties of heart and life, which God hath absolutely commanded you? and are you heartily sorry that you perform them no better? With no more cheerfulness, delight, success and constancy?*

4. *Are you so throughly convinced of the Worth of everlasting Happiness, and the intollerableness of everlasting misery, and the truth of both, and of the Soveraignty of God the Father and Christ the Redeemer; and your many engagements to him, and of the necessity and good of obeying, and the evil of sinning; that you are truly willing, that is, have a setled resolution, to cleave to Christ and obey him, in the deerest, most disgracefull, painfull, hazardous, fleshdispleasing Duties; even though it should cost you the loss of all your worldly enjoyments, and your life?*

5. *Doth this Willingness or resolution already so far prevail in your heart and life, against all the Interest and Temptations of*

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the World, the devil and your flesh, that you do ordinarily practise, the most strict and holy, the most self-denying, costly and hazardous duties that you know God requireth of you, and do heartily strive against all known sin, and overcome all gross sins, and when you fall under any prevailing temptation, do rise again by Repentance, and begging pardon of God through the blood of Christ, do resolve to watch and resist more carefully for the time to come.

In these five Marks is expressed the Gospel-description of a true Christian.

Having laid down these Marks, I must needs add a few words for the explaining of some things in them, least you mistake the meaning and so lose the benefit of them.

1. Observe that it is your *willingness* which is the very Point to be tried. And therefore 1. Judge not by your bare knowledge. 2. Judge not by the stirrings or passionate workings of your Affections. I pray you forget not this Rule in any of your self-examinings: It is the heart that God requireth; *My son, give me thy heart*, Prov. 23.26. If he hath the Will he hath the heart. He may have much of our Knowledge and not our heart: but when we Know him so throughly as to Will him unfeignedly, then he hath our heart. Affectionate workings of soul to God

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in Christ, are sweet things, and high and noble Duties, and such as all Christians should strive for: But they are not the safest Marks to try our states by: 1. Because there may be a solid, sincere intention and choice in and of the Will, when there is little stirring perceived in the Affections. 2. Because the Will is the Master, Commanding Faculty of the Rational soul; and so if it be right that man is upright and safe. 3. Because the Passions and Affections are so mutable and uncertain: The Will can command them but imperfectly; it cannot perfectly Restrain them from vanities: much less can it perfectly raise them to that height, as is suitable to the excellency of our heavenly objects. But the object it self, with its sensible manner of apprehension moves them more then all the Command of the Will. And so we finde by experience, that a godly man when with his utmost private endeavour he cannot command one stirring pang of divine Love or Joy in his soul, yet upon the hearing of some moving Sermon, or the sudden receiving of some extraordinary Mercy, or the reading of some quickning book, he shall feel perhaps some stirring of that Affection. So when we cannot weep in private one tear for sin, yet at a stirring Sermon, or when we give vent to our sorrows, and ease our troubled hearts into the bosome

boſome of ſome faithfull friend, then we can finde tears. 4. Becauſe Paſſions and Affections depend ſo much on the temperature of the Body: To one they are eaſie, familiar and at command: to another (as honeſt) they are difficult and ſcarce ſtirred at all. With moſt women, and perſons of weaker tempers, they are eaſier then with men. Some cannot weep at the death of a friend, though never ſo deer: no nor perhaps feel very ſenſible inward grief: and yet perhaps would have redeemed his life at a far deerer rate (had it been poſſible) then thoſe that can grieve and weep more abundantly. 5. Becauſe Worldly things have ſo great an advantage on our Paſſions and Affections. 1. They are ſenſible and neer us, and our knowledge of them is clear: But God is not to be ſeen, heard or felt by our ſenſes: he is far from us, though locally preſent with us: we are capable of knowing but little, very little of him. 2. Earthly things are *alway* before our eyes; their advantage is continuall. 3. Earthly things being ſtill the objects of our ſenſes, do force our Paſſions, whether we will or not: though they cannot force our Wills. 6. Becauſe Affections and Paſſions riſe and fall, and neither are nor can be in any even and conſtant frame: and therefore are unfit to be the conſtant or certain evi-

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dence of our ſtate: But the Wills Reſolution and Choice may be more conſtant. So that I adviſe you rather to try your ſelf by your Will, then by your Paſſionate ſtirrings of Love or longing, of Joy or ſorrow.

Object. But doth not Scripture lay as much on Love, as on any Grace? and doth not Chriſt ſay, that except we Love him above all, we cannot be his Diſciples?

Anſw. Its all very true. But conſider, Love hath two parts; the one in the Will, which is commonly called, a faculty of the ſoul as Rational; and this is the ſame thing that I call *Willing*, Accepting, Chooſing or Conſenting: this Complacency is true Love to Chriſt; and this is the ſure ſtanding Mark. The other is the Paſſionate part, commonly ſaid to be in the ſoul as ſenſitive; and this, though moſt commonly called Love, yet is leſs certain and conſtant, and ſo unfitter to try your ſtate by; though a great duty ſo far as we can reach it.

2. You muſt underſtand and well remember, that it is not every *willingneſs* that will prove your ſincerity. For wicked men may have ſlight apprehenſions of ſpiritual things, which may produce ſome ſlight deſires and wiſhes, which yet are ſo feeble and heartleſs, that every luſt and carnal deſire overcomes them: And it will not ſo much as enable them

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to deny the groſſeſt ſin. But it muſt be the Prevalent part of your Will that God muſt have: I mean, a greater ſhare, a deeper and larger room then any thing in the world. That is, you muſt have a higher eſtimation of God, and everlaſting happineſs, and Chriſt and a holy life, then of any thing in the world: and alſo your Will muſt be ſo diſpoſed hereby and inclined to God, that if God and Glory to be obtained through Chriſt by a holy ſelf-denying life, were ſet before you on the one hand; and the Pleaſure, Profits and Honours of the world, to be enjoyed in a way of ſin, on the other hand; you would reſolvedly take the former and refuſe the later. Indeed they are thus ſet before you: and upon your choice dependeth your ſalvation or damnation (though that Choice muſt come from the Grace of God.)

3. Yet muſt you well remember, that this Willingneſs and Choice is ſtill imperfect: and therefore when I mention *a hearty willingneſs*, I mean not *a perfect willingneſs*. There may be and is in the moſt gracious ſouls on earth, much undiſpoſedneſs, backwardneſs and withdrawing of heart, which is too great a meaſure of unwillingneſs to duty. Eſpecially to thoſe duties which the fleſh is moſt averſe from, and which require moſt of God and his Spirit to the right performance of them.

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Among all Duties, I think the ſoul is naturally moſt backward to theſe following: 1. To ſecret Prayer: becauſe it is ſpiritual, and requires great reverence, and hath nothing of external pomp or form to take us up with, and conſiſteth not much in the exerciſe of common gifts, but in the exerciſe of ſpecial Grace, and the breathings of the Spirit, and ſearchings, pantings and ſtrivings of a gracious ſoul towards God. (I do not ſpeak of the heartleſs repeating of bare words, learned by rote, and either not underſtood, or not uttered from the feeling of the ſoul.) 2. To ſerious Meditation, alſo is the ſoul very backward: that is, either to meditate on God, and the promiſed Glory, or any ſpiritual ſubject, to this end, that the heart may be thereby quickned and raiſed, and graces exerciſed: (though to meditate on the ſame ſubject, only to know or diſpute on it, the heart is nothing neer ſo backward.) Or elſe to meditate on the ſtate of our own hearts, by way of ſelf-examination, or ſelf-judging, or ſelf-reprehenſion, or ſelf-exciting. 3. Alſo to the Duty of faithfull dealing with each others ſouls, in ſecret reproof and exhortation, plainly (though lovingly) to tell each other of our ſins and danger, to this the heart is uſually very backward, partly through a ſinfull baſhfulneſs, partly for want of more be-

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leeving lively apprehenſions of our duty and our brothers danger, and partly becauſe we are loath to diſpleaſe men and loſe their favour; it being grown ſo common for men to fall out with thoſe (if not hate them) that deal plainly and faithfully with them. 4. Alſo to Take a Reproof, as well as to Give it, the heart is very backward: Even godly men (through the ſad remainders of their ſinfulneſs,) do too commonly frown, and ſnarle, and retort our reproofs, and ſtudy preſently how to excuſe themſelves and put it by, or how to charge us with ſomething that may ſtop our mouthes, and make the reprover ſeem as bad as themſelves: Though they dare not tread our reproofs under feet, and turn again and all to rent us, yet they oft ſhew the remnants of a dogged nature, though when they review their waies, it coſts them ſorrow. We muſt ſugar and butter our words, and make them liker to ſtroaking then ſtriking, liker an approving then a reproving them, liker flattery then faithfull dealing, and yet when we have all done, they go down very hardly, and that but half way, even with many godly people when they are under a temptation. 5. The like may be ſaid of all thoſe Duties which do pinch upon our credit or profit, or tend to diſgrace us or impoveriſh us in the world: As the confeſſing of a Diſ-

gracefull fault: the free Giving to the poor or sacred uses, according to our estates: the parting with our own Right or Gain for Peace: the patient suffering of wrong, and forgiving it heartily; and loving bitter abusive enemies: especially the running upon the stream of mens displeasure, and incurring the danger of being utterly undone in our worldly state (especially if men be rich: who do therefore as hardly get to Heaven as a Camel through a needles eye:) and above all, the laying down of our lives for Christ: It cannot be expected, that godly men should perform all these with perfect Willingness: The flesh will play its part, in pleading its own cause; and will strive hard to maintain its own interest: O the shifts, the subtill arguments, or at least the clamorous and importunate contradictions that all these Duties will meet with in the best, so far as they are unrenewed, and their Graces weak! so that you may well hence conclude that you are a sinner; but you may not conclude that you are Graceless, because of a backwardness and some unwillingness to Duty.

Yet your Willingness must be greater then your unwillingness; and so Christ must have the prevailing part of your will; and from that the denomination is usually taken: so that Scripture useth to affirm Gods people

to be willing, even when they fail in the execution. So *Paul* Rom.7.18. saith, *To will is present with me, when how to do or perform he found not:* that is, not to obey so perfectly as he would do: not to love God so intensly and fervently; not to subdue passions and lusts so throughly; not to watch our thoughts, and words, and waies so narrowly, and order them so exactly as the bent of his will did consent to. And lest any Arminian should pretend (as they do) that *Paul* speaks here in the person of an unregenerate man, as under the convictions of the Law, and not as a man regenerate; it is plain in the text that he speaks of himself in the state which he was then in, and that state was a regenerate state: He expresly saith, It is thus and thus with me; *So then I my self with my minde do serve the Law of God: but with my flesh the Law of sin,* ver.25. And to put it out of doubt, the Apostle speaks the like of all Christians, *Gal.*5.17. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* This is the plain exposition of *Rom.*7. Here Scripture maketh the Godly willing to do more then they do, or can do: but yet it is not a perfect Willingness, but it is the Prevailing Inclination and Choice of the Will, and that gives the name.

4. Observe further, that I add your Actual performance of Duty; because true hearty Willingness, will shew it self in actions and endeavours. It is but dissembling, if I should say, I am *willing* to perform the strictest, holiest Duties, and yet do not perform them. To say, I am willing to Pray, and Pray not: or to Give to the poor, and yet Give not: or to perform the most self-denying costly Duties, and yet when it should come to the Practise, I will not be perswaded or drawn to them? I will not confess a disgracefull sin; nor further a good Cause to my danger, cost or trouble; nor reprove, nor submit to reproof; nor turn from the way of temptations, or the like. Action must discover true Willingness. The son that said to his father, *I go Sir,* but went not to labour in the vineyard, was not Accepted or Justified. If therefore you are in doubt whether your Willingness be sincere, enquire into your practice and performance. God commandeth you to Pray, to Instruct your family, to be Mercifull to the poor, to forgive those that wrong you, *&c.* The flesh and the Devil perswade you from these. Do you perform them, or do you not? Though you may do it with backwardness, and dullness, and weakness, yet do you Do it? and desire you could do it better? and lament your misdoing it? and *endeavour* to Do it better

ter then you have formerly done? This shews then that the spirit prevaileth, though the flesh do contradict it.

5. Yet here you must carefully distinguish of Duties: For God hath made some to be secondary parts of the condition of the Covenant, and so of flat necessity for the continuance of our Justification, and for the attaining of Glorification: Such are confessing Christ before men when we are called to it; confessing sin; Praying; shewing Mercy to the poor; forgiving wrongs; hearing and yielding to Gods Word, *&c.* still supposing that there be opportunity and necessaries for the performance of these. But some duties there are that God hath not laid so great a stress or necessity on: though yet the wilfull resolved omission in ordinary, of any known duty, is contrary to the nature of true Obedience.

Also, the Case may much differ with several persons, places and seasons, concerning Duty: that may be a Duty to one man that is not to another; and in one place, which is not in another; and at one season, which is not at another. And that may be a greater duty, and of indispensable necessity to one, which to another is not so great. It may stand with true Grace, to omit that duty which men know not to be a duty, or not to be so to

them (except where the duty is such as is it self of absolute neeessity to salvation:) but it cannot so stand with Grace in those that know it, ordinarily to reject it.

6. Also you must understand, that when I say, that true Willingness to be Ruled by Christ, will shew it self in Actual Obedience; I do not mean it of every particular individual Act which is our Duty, as if you should judge your self Graceless for every particular omission of a duty: no, though you knew it to be a duty: and though you considered it to be a duty. For 1. There may be a true Habituated Inclination and Willingness to obey Christ rooted in the heart, when yet by the force of a temptation, the actual prevalency of it at that time in that act may be hindered and suppreſt. 2. And at the same time, you do hold on in a course of obedience in other duties, 3. And when the temptation is overcome, and Grace hath been rowsed up against the flesh, and you soberly recollect your thoughts, you will return to Obedience in that duty also. Yea how many daies, or weeks, or moneths, a true Christian may possibly neglect a known duty, I will not dare to determe (of which more anon.) Yet such omissions as will not stand with a sincere Resolution and Willingness to obey Christ universally (I mean a Habitual Willingness

will not consist with the truth of Grace.

7. I know the fourth Mark, about forsaking All for Christ, may seem somewhat unseasonable and harsh to propound for the quieting of a troubled conscience. But yet, I durst not omit it, seeing Christ hath not omitted it; nay seeing he hath so urged it, and laid such a stress on it in the Scripture as he hath done; dare not dawb, nor be unfaithfull, for fear of troubling: such skinning over the wound, will but prepare for more trouble & a further cure. Christ thought it meet even to tell young beginners of the worst (though it might possibly discourage them, and did turn some back (that they might not come to him upon mistaken expectations: and he requireth all that will be Christians and be saved, to count their cost before hand, and reckon what it will stand them in to be Christs Disciples; and if they cannot undergo his termes (that is, to deny themselves, take up their Cross, forsake all and follow him) they cannot be his Disciples. And Christ had rather they knew it before hand, then to deceive themselves, or to turn back when they meet with what they never thought of, and then to imagin that Christ had deceived them & drawn them in, and done the wrong.

8. When I say in the fourth Mark, that you must have *a setled Resolution*, I mean the

same thing as before I did by *hearty willingness*. But it is meeter here to call it *Resolution*, because this is the proper name for that act of the Will, which is *a determination of it self upon deliberation, after any wavering, to the doing or submitting to any thing as commanded.* I told you, it must be the Prevailing act of the Will that must prove you sincere: Every cold uneffectual wish will not serve tern. Christ seeks for your heart on one side, and the World with its pleasures, profits and honours on the other side: The soul which upon consideration of both, doth prefer Christ in his choice, and reject the world (as it is competitor with him) and this not doubtingly and with reservation for further deliberation or trial, but presently passeth his consent for better and worse, this is said to be *a Resolving*. And I know no one word that more fitly expresseth the nature of that Grace, which differenceth a true Christian from all hypocrites, and by which a man may safely judge of his estate.

9. Yet I here add, that it must be *a setled Resolution*: And that to intimate, that it must be a Habituated Willingness or Resolution. The Prevalency of Christs Interest in the soul must be a Habitual Prevalency. If a man that is terrified by a rowsing Sermon, or that lieth in expectation of present death, should actually

actually Resolve to forsake sin, or perform duty; without any further change of minde, or habit, or fixedness of this Resolution, it would be of no great value, and soon extinguished. Though yet I believe that no unsanctified man doth ever attain to that full Resolution for Christ, which hath a complacency in Christ accompanying it, and which may be termed, the Prevailing part of the Will: Those that seem Resolved to day to be for Christ, and to deny the world and the flesh, and the next day are unresolved again, have cause to suspect that they were never truly Resolved. Though the Will of a godly man may lye under declinings in the degrees of Resolution, yet Christ hath alwaies his Habitual Resolutions, and usually his Actual in a prevalent degree.

10. I add also the Grounds (in the fourth Mark) on which this Resolution must be raised. For false Grounds in the Understanding will not bear up a true Resolution in the Will. And therefore we put the Articles of our Creed, before our Profession of Consent and Obedience. Sound Doctrine, and sound Belief of it, breeds a sound Resolution, and makes a sound heart and life. If a man resolve to obey Christ, upon a conceit that Christ will never put him upon any suffering (else he would not resolve it,) and that he

will give him such bruitish pleasures when he is dead as *Mahomet* hath promised to his disciples, this Resolution were not sound: yet in many lesser points of Doctrine a true Christian may be unsound, and yet soundly cleave to the foundation. He may build hay and stubble possibly: but the foundation must be held.

11. Observe well (lest you mistake me) that I speak only of the Necessity of your present Resolving to forsake all for Christ, if he call you to it; but I speak not of your absolute Promise or Prediction that eventually, you shall not deny or forsake him. You may be uncertain how you shall be upheld in a day of trial, and yet you may now be Resolved or fully Purposed in your own minde what to do. To say, *I will not consent, purpose or resolve, unless I were certain to perform my Resolutions, and not to flag or change again*; this is but to say, I will be no Christian unless I were sure to persevere. I will not be married to Christ, lest I should be drawn to break my covenant with him.

12. Also observe, that when I speak of your *resolving* to forsake all for Christ, it is not to cast away your state or life, but to submit it to his dispose, and to relinquish it only in case that he command you so.

13. And I do not intend that you should be

be able thus to Resolve of your self without the special Grace of God; nor yet without it to continue those Resolutions; much less to perform them by actual suffering.

Object. But I cannot be sure that God will give me Grace to persevere, or at least not to deny him as *Peter* did; and therefore I should neither Promise nor Resolve what I cannot be certain to perform?

Answ. 1. I suppose you have read the many Scriptures and Arguments which our Divines ordinarily use to prove that the true Believers shall not fall quite away. And I know not how the opposers can answer that text which themselves use to alledge for the contrary, *Mat.* 13.6,21. Those that believe for a time, and in the time of persecution fall away, it is because the seed had not depth of earth, the word never took rooting in their hearts. Whence it seems that it may be well inferred, that those shall not fall away in time of temptation, in whom the word of God hath taken deep rooting. And that is, in them *in whose hearts or Wills Christ hath a stronger interest then the creature*, or *those that have a well-grounded, unreserved, habituated or setled Resolution to be for Christ.* 2. However, your present Resolution and your Covenanting with Christ is no more but this; to say, *I do Consent: or, this I am Resolved to do, by the*

the help of Gods Grace. 3. Else no man should be Baptized or become a Christian, because he is uncertain to keep his Covenants: For all that are Baptized, do Covenant and vow, *to forsake the World, flesh and Devil, and fight under Christs banner to their lives end.* Understand me therefore, that you are not to promise to do this by your own strength, but by the strength of Christ, as knowing that he hath promised his Spirit and Grace for the aid of every true Believer.

14. If your Resolution at present be hearty, you ought not to vex and disquiet your minde with doubtfull tormenting fears, what you should do, if you be put to it, to forsake all, and suffer death for Christ. For he hath promised to lay no more on us then we can bear, but with the temptation will make us a way to come forth, 1 *Cor.*10,13. either he will not bring us into trials beyond our strength; or else he will increase our strength according to our trials. He hath bid us pray, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:* and he hath promised, *that Whatsoever We ask in the name of Christ according to his Will he Will give us.* So that if once you can but truly say, that it is your full Resolution to forsake all for Christ if he call you to it, and that on the forementioned grounds, you ought not then to vex your soul with fears

of

of the issue: for that is but to distrust God your father and your strength. Only you must be carefull to do your duty to the keeping up of your present Resolutions, and to wait obediently on God for the help of his Spirit, and to beg it earnestly at his hands.

15. Much less, is it lawfull for men to feign and suppose such calamities to themselves, as God doth never try men by, and then to ask themselves, Can I bear these for Christ? and so to try themselves on false and dangerous grounds. Some use to be troubled, lest if they were put to long and exquisite torments for Christ they should renounce him. One saith, I cannot endure the torments of Hell for Christ: Another saith, Could I endure to be roasted or torn in pieces so many weeks or daies together? or could I endure to die so many times over? These are foolish, sinfull questions, which Christ never desired you to put to your selves. He never tries mens faith on this manner. Tormentors cannot go beyond his Will. Nay it is but very few that he tries by death: and fewer by an extream tormenting death. All this therefore proceeds from errour.

16. Observe, from the fifth Mark, That the present Prevalency of your Resolutions now against those Temptations which you encounter with, may well encourage you to

expect

expect that they ſhould prevail hereafter, if God bring you into greater trials. Can you now follow Chriſt in a holy life, though your fleſh repine and would have its liberties and pleaſures, and though the world deride or threaten you, or great ones turn againſt you and threaten your undoing? Can you part with your money to the poor, or to the promoting of any work of Chriſt, according to the meaſure of eſtate that God hath allotted you, notwithſtanding all temptations to the contrary? Some trials you have now: if you can go well through theſe, you have no cauſe to diſquiet your minde with fears of falling in greater trials. But he that cannot now deny his greedy Appetite in meats and drinks ſo far as to forbear exceſs; nor can deny his credit with men, nor bear the ſcorns or frowns of the world, but be on the ſtronger ſide, and decline his duty to avoid danger, whatever become of conſcience or Gods favour; this man is not like to forſake and lay down his life for Chriſt and his cauſe.

Object. But though I break through leſſer trials, I am not ſure to overcome in greater: for the ſame meaſure of Grace will not enable a man to forſake All, which will enable him to forſake a little. Many have gone through ſmaller trials, and after forſaken Chriſt

Christ in greater: And Christ makes it the property of temporaries that are not rooted in the faith, that they fall when tribulation and persecution for the Gospel ariseth: and therefore it seems they may stand till then: and if trial never come, they may never fall, and yet be unsound in the mean time?

Answ. 1. If your trial now be considerable, the truth of Grace may be manifested in it, though it be none of the greatest, and though in striving against sin you have not yet resisted unto bloud. 2. If you carefully observe your own heart, you may discern whether the spirit and your resolutions be prevalent, by their daily subduing and mortifying the flesh and its lusts. Nay let me tell you, the Victory of Gods Spirit over the flattering, enticing world in prosperity, is as great and glorious, if not more, then that over the frowning, persecuting world in adversity. And therefore finde the one, and you need not fear the other. Though I confess that hypocrites do not fall so visibly and shamefully alwayes in prosperity as in adversity: for they have more pretences, advantages and carnal shifts to hide the shame of their falls. And for that in the Parable in *Mat.* 13. I pray you mark one thing: Christ seems to speak of every several sort of Hearers by a Gradation, speaking last of those that

that go fartheſt. The firſt ſort are the common, ignorant, negligent Hearers, in whom the word takes no root at all. The ſecond ſort are thoſe that give it a ſlight and ſhallow rooting, but no deep rooting at all: theſe are they that fall away in tribulation. By *falling away*, is meant the plain deſerting Chriſt or the ſubſtance of his Cauſe. Theſe men till this falling away, though they profeſſed Chriſt, and heard the word with joy, yet no doubt, did not crucifie the fleſh & the world: whereby they might have diſcovered their unſoundneſs if they would, before tribulation came: Firſt, By diſcerning that the Word was not deep rooted, 1. In their Judgement and Eſtimation, 2. Or in their Wills and ſetled Reſolution. Secondly, And by diſcerning the unmortified luſts of their hearts in the mean time. But it ſeems the third ſort of Hearers likened to the *thorny ground*, went further then theſe: for here it is only ſaid by *Luk.*8. 14. *that they bring no fruit to perfection*: However, whether theſe went farther then the other, or not, it is certain that theſe alſo had their trial and fell in the trial: The deceitfullneſs of riches overturned theſe, as the heat of perſecution overturned the other. So that it is evident that proſperity puts faith to the trial, as well as adverſity. But mark the different manner of their falls and overthrowes:

overthrowes: They that are overthrown by adverſity, are ſaid *to fall away*, that is, to forſake Chriſt openly: but they that fall by proſperity, are not ſaid to fall away; but only that *the deceitfullneſs of riches and cares of the world choak the word, ſo that it becomes unfruitfull, that is, brings no fruit to perfection.* For uſually theſe do not openly forſake Chriſt, but continue oft an unfruitfull and hypocriticall profeſſion; inſomuch that at that very time when the Word is choaked and fruitleſs, yet the blade of profeſſion may be as green as ever, and they may be ſo much in ſome duties, and have ſuch golden words, and wity ſhifts to plead for every covetous practice, and put ſo fair a gloſs on all their actions, that they may keep up the credit of being very eminent Chriſtians. So that if your Grace can carry you well through proſperity, you may be confident of the truth of it. 3. And then if it be thus proved true and ſaving, you have cauſe to be confident that it will hold out in adverſity alſo, and cauſe you to overcome the ſhake of tribulation. I think moſt men are better in adverſity than in proſperity: though I confeſs no adverſity is ſo ſhaking, as that which leaves it in a mans choice to come out of it by ſinning: As for a man in health to be perſecuted, and the perſecutor to ſay, If thou wilt

wilt turn to my ſide and way I will give thee thy life and preferment with it: But ſickneſs or other ſufferings impoſed only by God, and which only God can take off, are nothing ſo ſhaking. For as the former drawes us to pleaſe men that *they* may deliver us, ſo this drawes even the wicked to think of pleaſing God, that *He* may deliver them.

17. Obſerve that when I ask *whether this Reſolution do already prevail*, I do not mean any perfect prevailing: nay ſin may prevail to draw you to a particular act (and how many, I will not undertake to tell you:) and yet ſtill Grace and the Spirit do conquer in the main. For you will ſay, that General and Army get the victory who vanquiſh the other and win the field, though yet perhaps a Troop or Regiment may be routed, and many ſlain.

18. When I ſpeak of your *overcoming all groſs ſins*, as I mean in ordinary, not doubting but its too poſſible for a believer to commit a groſs ſin; ſo I confeſs, that its hard to tell juſt which ſins are to be called groſs, and which infirmities only: or (as ſome ſpeak) which is mortal, and which not. And therefore this Mark hath ſome difficulties as to the right trying by it (of which more anon.)

19. Yet I deſire that you joyn them all together in trial, ſeeing it is in the whole that the

the true and full description of a Christian is contained. The same description of a true Christian (presupposing his right belief) I have drawn up in our publike Church-profession, which in this County the Ministers have agreed on; in the Profession of Consent in these words; *I do heartily take this one God for my only God and chief good, and this Jesus Christ for my only Lord-Redeemer and Saviour, and this holy Ghost for my sanctifier; and the Doctrine by him revealed, and sealed by his Miracles, and now contained in the holy Scriptures, do I take for the Law of God and the Rule of my Faith and Life: And Repenting unfeignedly of my sins, I do resolve through the Grace of God sincerely to obey him, both in Holiness to God and Righteousness to men, and in special Love to the Saints and Communion with them, against all the Temptations of the Devil, the World, and my own flesh, and this to the death.* He that sincerely can speak these words, is a sincere Christian.

20. Lastly, That you may see that those five which I laid you down are all true Marks, do but peruse these texts of Scripture following. For the first, *Psal.* 16.5,2. and 73. 24,25,26,27,28. and 4.6,7. and 1.1,2,3. *Josh.* 24.16,17,18,21,22,24. *Mat.* 6.19,20,21. *Rom.* 7.24. and 8.17,18,23. *Heb.* 11.10,15, 16, 25, 26,27. *Psal.* 16.5,6,7,8. For the second,

second, see *Joh.*1.10,11,12. *Joh.*3.16. *Mark.* 16.16. *Acts* 16.31. *Joh.*14.21. and 16.27. *Rom.*14.9. *Luk.*19.27. *Jam.*1.12. *Mat.*22.37. 1*Cor.*16.22. *Mat.*10.37. *Rev.*22.14. *Heb.*5.9. For the third most of the same will serve: and *Heb.*12.14. *Mat.*7.24. *Psal.*1.2,3. *Mat.*5.20. *Acts* 10.35. *Rom.*7.22. For the two last, besides the former, see *Heb.*11.6. *Rom.*8. from the 1. to 14. *Gal.*5.17,24. and 26.8. 1 *Tim.* 6.9. *Luk.*8.13. 1 *Joh.*2.15. and 5.4,5. *Jam.*1. 27. and 4.4. *Gal.*6.14. and 1.4. *Rom.*12.2. *Tit.* 2.14. *Mat.*10 37. *Rom.*2.5,6,7. *Rev.*14.13. *Phil.*2.14. *Col.*3.23,24. 1 *Cor.*3.8,14. *Joh.*12. 16. 1 *Joh.*3.22,23. *Gen.*22.16. *Mat.*10 22. and 24.13. *Heb.*3.6,14. and 6.11. *Rev.*2.26, 10. and 12.11. *Mat.*16.25. and 10.39. *Mar.* 17.33. *Rom.*8.9,13. *Luk.*13.3,5. *Rom.*6.4,5, 6,12,14,16,17,22.

And thus I have given you such Marks as you may safely try your self by, and cleared the meaning of them to you. Now let me advise you to this use of them. 1. In your serious self-examination, try only by these, and not by any uncertain Marks. I know there be promises of Life made to some particular duties and single qualifications in Scripture, as to Humility, Meekness, Almes-deeds, Love to the Godly, *&c.* but it is still both on supposition that they be not single in the person, but are accompanied with, and

and flow from that faith and love to God beforementioned; and alſo that they are in a prevailing degree.

2. When ever any freſh doubtings ariſe in you, upon the ſtirrings of corruption, or debility of Graces, ſtill have recourſe to theſe former Marks; and while you finde theſe, let not any thing cauſe you to paſs wrong judgements on your ſelf. Lay theſe now to your own heart, and tell me, *Are you not unfeignedly willing to have Chriſt on the termes that he is offered? Are you not willing to be more holy? and beg of him to make you ſo? Would you not be glad if your ſoul were more perfectly ſanctified and rid of that body of ſin, though it were to the ſmart and diſpleaſing of your fleſh? Are you not willing to wait on God in the uſe of his Ordinances, in that poor weak meaſure as you are able to perform them? Durſt you or would you quit your part in God, Heaven, Chriſt, and forſake the way of Holineſs, and do as the prophane world doth, though it were to pleaſe your fleſh or ſave your ſtate or life? Do not you daily ſtrive againſt the fleſh, and keep it under, and deny it its deſires? Do you not deny the world when it would hinder you from works of Mercy or publique Good, according to your ability? Is it not the grief of your ſoul when you fall? and your greateſt trouble that you cannot walk more obediently, innocently*

innocently and fruitfully? and do you not after sinning Resolve to be more watchfull for the time to come? Are you not resolved to stick to Christ and his holy Laws and Waies, whatever changes or dangers come? and rather to forsake friends and all that you have, then to forsake him? Yet in a godly jealousie and distrust of your own heart, do renounce your own strength, and resolve to do this only in the strength of Christ? and therefore daily beg it of him? Is it not your daily care and business to please God, and do his Will, and avoid sinning in your weak measure? I hope that all this is so, and your own case; which if it be you have Infallible Evidences, and want but the sight and comfort of them: You have the true grounds for Assurance, though you want Assurance it self: Your chief danger is over, though your trouble remain. Your soul is at the present in a safe condition, though not in the sense of it: You are in the state of salvation, though not of consolation. It must be your next work therefore to study Gods Mercies, and take notice what he hath done for your soul. Let not so blessed a guest as the holy Ghost dwell in you unobserved. Shall he do such wonders in you and for you, and you not know it, or acknowledge it? Shall he new beget you, and new make you, and produce a spiritual, heavenly nature in you, who

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of your self were so carnal and earthly, and will you not observe it? Had you any of these holy desires, endeavors or resolutions of your self by nature? Or have the ungodly about you any of them? O that you knew what a Work of wonderfull Mercy, Wisdom and Power the Spirit performeth in the renewing of a soul? then sure you would more observe and admire his Love to you herein!

DIRECTION XII.

12. *The next Rule for your Direction for the right setling of your Peace is this. You must know, that* Assurance of Justification, Adoption, and right to Salvation cannot be gathered from the smallest degree of Saving Grace.

HEre I must say something for explaining my meaning to you. 2. And then give you my Reasons of this Assertion.

1. Understand that I speak of Gods ordinary working by means, not denying but God may by a voice from Heaven, or an Angel, or other supernatural Revelation, bestow

ſtow Aſſurance on whom he pleaſeth. But I hope all wiſe Chriſtians will take heed of expecting this, or of truſting too much to ſeeming Revelations, unleſs they could prove that God uſeth to conferre Aſſurance in this way; which I think, they cannot.

2. By *the ſmalleſt degree of Grace*, I mean, of Faith, Love, Obedience and thoſe ſaving Graces whoſe acts are the condition of our Salvation, and which in the fore-expreſſed Marks I laid down to you. Do not therefore ſo farre miſtake me, as to think that I ſpeak of a ſmall meaſure of thoſe common Gifts which are ſeparable from true Sanctification: ſuch as are extenſive Knowledge, Memory, Ability of Utterance in Preaching, Repeating, Exhorting or Praying; An ornate, plauſible winning deportment before men, ſuch as is commonly called Good breeding or Manners; An affected humble, complementall familiarity and condeſcenſion, to creep into mens eſtimation and affections, and ſteal their hearts, *&c.* Many a one that is ſtrong in ſaving Grace, is weak in all theſe, and other the like.

Now for my Reaſons.

1. I conceive that it is not poſſible for any Miniſter punctually to ſet down a diſcernable difference between the leaſt meaſure of True ſaving Grace, and the higheſt degree of

of common Grace; and to ſay, Juſt here it is that they part, or by this you may diſcern them. I do but ſay, I think ſo, becauſe other men may know farre more then I do: But I will ſay it as certain, that I am not able to do it, for my own part. This much I can tell, that the leaſt degree of Grace that is ſaving doth determine the ſoul for God and Chriſt, againſt the world and fleſh that ſtand as Competitors; and ſo where Chriſts intereſt prevaileth in the leaſt meaſure, there is the leaſt meaſure of ſaving Grace: As when you are weighing two things in the balance, and at laſt make it ſo near evenweight, that one end is turned and no more: ſo when you are conſidering whether to be for Chriſt or for the fleſh and the world, and your Will is but even a very little Determined to Chriſt, and preferreth him; this is the leaſt meaſure of ſaving Grace. But then how a poor ſoul ſhould diſcern this prevalent choice and determination of it ſelf, is all the Queſtion. For there is nothing more eaſie and common then for men to think verily, that they preferre Chriſt above the creature, as long as no temptation doth aſſault them, nor ſenſual objects ſtand up in any conſiderable ſtrength to entice them: Nay wicked men do truly, oft times, purpoſe to obey Chriſt before the fleſh, and to take him for their Lord, meerly

in the general, when they do not know or consider the quality of his Laws; that they are so strict and spiritual and contrary to the flesh, and hazardous to their worldly hopes and seeming-happiness: But when it comes to particulars, and God saith, *Now deny thy self, and thy friend, and thy goods, and thy life for my sake,* alas, it was never his Resolution to do it; nor will he be perswaded to it. But he that said to God who sends him to labour in his Vineyard, *I go Sir,* when he comes to finde the unpleasingness of the Work, he goes not, or never sets a hand to it. So that it is evident that it is no true saving Resolution or Willingness, which prevaileth not for actual Obedience. Now here comes in the unresolvable Doubt, What is the least Measure of Obedience that will prove a man truly Willing and Resolved, or to have truly Accepted of Christ for his Lord? This obedience lieth in Performing what is commanded, and Avoiding what is forbidden. Now it is too certain that every true Believer is guilty of a frequent neglect of Duty, yea of known Duty: We know we should Love God more abundantly, and Delight in him, and Meditate more on him, and Pray more oft and earnestly then we do, and instruct our Families more diligently, and speak against sin more boldly, and admonish our neighbours

neighbours more faithfully, with many the like: *The good that we would do we do not, Rom.*7.19. Nay the flesh so striveth against the Spirit, that we *cannot do the good we would, Gal.*5.17. Nay many a true Christian in time of temptation hath been drawn to omit secret prayer, or family duties almost wholly for a certain space of time: yea and perhaps to be so corrupted in his judgement for a time, as to think he doth well in it, as also in forbearing praising God by Psalmes, Receiving the Sacraments, and Communicating with the Church, hearing the Word publikely, *&c.* (for what duty almost is not denied of late?) and perhaps may not only omit Relieving the poor for a time, but excuse it. Now what man can punctually determine just how often a true Christian may be guilty of any such omission? and just how long he may continue it? and what the duties be which he may possibly so omit, and what not?

So also in sins of Commission: Alas, what sins did *Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, Asa, Peter, &c.* commit? If we should say as the Papists and Arminians, that these being mortal sins, do for the time, till Repentance restore him, cast a true Christian out of Gods favour into a state of Damnation; then what man breathing is able to enumerate those Mortal

ſins? and tell us which be ſo Damning, and which not? Nay if he could ſay, Drunkenneſs is one, and Gluttony another; Who can ſet the punctual ſtint, and ſay, Juſt ſo many bits a man muſt eat before he be a Glutton: or Juſt ſo much he muſt drink before he be a Drunkard? or by ſuch a ſigne the turning point may be certainly known? We may have ſignes by which he may be tried at the Barre of Man; but theſe are none of them taken from that ſmalleſt degree, which ſpecifieth and denominates the ſinne before God. If we avoid the foreſaid opinion, that one ſuch ſin doth bring us into the ſtate of Damnation, yet is the difficulty never the leſs: For it is certain, that *he that commits ſin is of the Devil*, 1 Joh.3.8. and there are ſpots which are not the ſpots of Gods children: and all true faith will mortifie the world to us and us to it, *Gal.*6.14. and *he that is in Chriſt hath crucified the fleſh with the affections and luſts thereof*, Gal.5.24. and that *if we live after the fleſh we ſhall die*, Rom.8.13. and *his ſervants we are to whom we obey, whether of ſin unto death, or of obedience unto Righteouſneſs*, Rom.6.16. and *if we delight in iniquity or regard it God will not hear our prayers*, *Pſal.*66.18. and that *he that nameth the name of Chriſt muſt depart from iniquity*, 1 Tim.2.19. and that *God will judge all men according*

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to their Works, and bid the workers of iniquity depart from him, *Mat.*7.23. Now can any man on earth tell us just how great or how often sinning will stand with true Grace, and how much will not? who can finde those punctual bounds in the Word of God? I conclude therefore, that no Minister, or at least, none who is no wiser then I am, can give a true discernable difference between the worst of Saints and the best of the unsanctified, or the weakest degree of true Grace, and the highest of common Grace; and so to help such weak Christians to true Assurance of their salvation.

2. But as this is impossible to be declared by the Teachers, so much more is it impossible to be discerned by the persons themselves (yea though it could possibly be declared to him:) and that for these Reasons.

1. From the nature of the thing. Small things are hardly discerned. A little is next to none. 2. From the great darkness of mans understanding, and his unacquaintedness with himself (both the nature, faculties and motions of his soul naturally considered, and the moral state, dispositions and motions of it;) and is it likely that so blinde an eye can discern the smallest thing, and that in so strange and dark a place? every purblind man cannot see an atome, or a pin, especially

in the dark. 3. The heart is deceitfull above all things as well as dark; full of ſeemings, counterfeits and falſe pretences: And a childe in Grace is not able to diſcover its juglings, and underſtand a book where almoſt every word is æquivocall or myſterious. 4. The heart is moſt confuſed, as well as dark and deceitfull: It is like a houſe or ſhop of tools, where all things are thrown together on a heap, and nothing keeps its own place: There are ſuch multiplicity of cogitations, phantaſies and paſſions, and ſuch irregular thronging in of them, and ſuch a confuſed reception and operation of objects and conceptions, that it is a wonderfull difficult thing for the beſt Chriſtian to diſcern clearly the bent and actions, and ſo the ſtate of his own ſoul. For in ſuch a crowd of cogitations and paſſions, we are like men in a Fair or crowd of people, where a confuſed noiſe may be heard, but you cannot well perceive what any of them ſay, except either ſome one neer you, that ſpeaks much lowder then all the reſt, or elſe except you ſingle out ſome one from the reſt, and go cloſe to him to confer with him of purpoſe. Our Intellect and Paſſi ons are like the lakes of water in the common roades, where the frequent paſſage of Horſes doth ſo muddy it, that you can ſee nothing in it, eſpecially that is neer the bottom;

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when in pure untroubled waters you may see a small thing. In such a confusion and tumult as is usually in mens souls, for a poor weak Christian to seek for the discovery of his sincerity, is according to the proverb, to seek for a needle in a bottle of hay. 5. Besides all this, the corrupt heart of man, is so exceeding backward to the work of self-examination, and the use of other means by which the soul should be familiarly acquainted with it self, that in a case of such difficulty, it will hardly ever overcome them, if it were a thing that might be done. In the best, a great deal of resolvedness, diligence and unwearied constancy in searching into the state of the soul, is necessary to the attainment of a setled Assurance and Peace: How much more in them that have so small and almost undiscernable a measure of Grace to discover. 6. Yet further, The Conceptions, Apprehensions, and consequently the sensible motions of the Will, and especially the Passions, are all naturally exceeding mutable: And while the mobile, agile spirits are any way the Instruments, it will be so: especially where the Impression which is made in the understanding is so small and weak. Naturally mans minde and will is exceeding mutable, turned into an hundred shapes in a few daies, according as objects are presented to us, and

the temperature of the body disposeth, helps or hinders the minde. Let us hear one man reason the Case, and we think he makes all as clear as the Light: Let us hear another solve all his Arguments, and dispute for the contrary, and then we see that our Apprehensions were abused. Let us hear him Reply and confute all again, and confirm his Cause, and then we think him in the right again. Nothing more changeable then the conceivings and minde of man, till he be throughly Resolved and Habituated. Now in this Case, how shall those that have but little Grace be able to discern it? It will not keep the minde from fluctuating. If they seem Resolved for obedience to Christ to day, to morrow they are so shaken by some enticing object, and force of the same temptation, that their Resolution is undiscernable; nay actually they prefer sin at that time before obedience: It is impossible then but the soul should stagger and be at a loss; for it will judge of it self as it findes it self: and it cannot discern the Habitual Prevalency of Christs Interest when they feel the Actual Prevalency of the fleshes Interest. For the Act is the only discoverer of the Habit: And if *Peter* himself should then have fallen to the examination of his heart, Whether he Preferred Christ before his Life, at the same time when he was denying

ing and forſwearing Chriſt to ſave his Life, do you think he could have diſcerned it? and yet even then Chriſts Intereſt was greateſt in him Habitually. If *David* ſhould have gone to ſearch, whether he preferred obedience to God before his fleſhly pleaſure, when he was committing Adultery; or before his credit, when he was plotting the death of *Uriah*, what diſcovery do you think he would have made? 7. Add to all theſe, that as theſe ſeverall diſtempers, were they but in the ſame meaſure in a weak Chriſtian as they are in the beſt or in moſt, would yet make the ſmalleſt meaſure of Grace undiſcernable (if we might ſuppoſe the ſmalleſt Grace to be conſiſtent with ſuch a frame;) ſo it is certain that whoever he be that hath the leaſt meaſure of Grace to diſcover in himſelf, he hath proportionably the leaſt meaſure of abilities and helps to diſcover it, and the greateſt meaſure of all the forementioned hinderances: He that hath but a very little Repentance, Faith, Love and Obedience (ſincere,) when he goeth to finde it out, he hath in the ſame meaſure, a Darker Underſtanding to diſcern it, then others have; and a greater ſtrangeneſs and diſacquaintance with himſelf; and more deceitfulneſs in his heart; and a greater confuſion and hurlyburly in his thoughts and Affections, and all more

out of order and to seek: Also he hath a greater backwardness to the work of self-examination, and can hardly get his heart to it, and more hardly, to do it throughly and search to the quick, and most hardly to hold on against all withdrawing temptations, till he have made a clearer discovery: And lastly, his soul is more mutable then stronger Christians are, and therefore when cross Actings are so frequent, he cannot discern the smallest prevailing Habit. If (when you are weighing Gold) the scales be turned but with one grain, every little jogge, or winde, or unsteadfast holding will actually lift up the heavier end; and its preponderation is with great wavering and mobility. 8. Yet further, Consider, those that have least Grace have most sin, habitual and actual; and they are so frequent in transgressing, that their failings are still in their eye: and thereby the prevalency of Christs interest is made more doubtfull and obscure: For when he asketh his own conscience, *Do I will or love most the World and my fleshly delights, or Christ and his Wayes?* presently conscience remembreth him, at such a time, and such a time thou didst choose thy fleshly pleasures, profits or credit, and refuse obedience: and it is so oft, and so foully, that the soul is utterly at a loss, and cannot discern the Habitual prevalent bent

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and Reſolution of the Will. 9. Beſides, Conſcience is a Judge in mans ſoul, and will be Accuſing and condemning men ſo far as they are guilty: now they that make work for the moſt frequent and terrible Accuſations of Conſcience that will ſtand with true Grace, are unlikely to have Aſſurance. For Aſſurance quiets the ſoul and eaſeth it; and a galled Conſcience works the contrary way. They that keep open the wound, and daily fret off the skin more, and are ſtill grating on the galled part, are unlikely to have Aſſurance. 10. Again, Theſe weakeſt Chriſtians being leaſt in Duty and moſt in ſinning (of any in whom ſin reigneth not) they are conſequently moſt in provoking and diſpleaſing God. And they that do ſo, ſhall finde that God will ſhew them his diſpleaſure, and will diſpleaſe them again. They muſt not look to enjoy Aſſurance, or ſee the Pleaſed face of God, till they are more carefull to pleaſe him, and are more ſparing and ſeldom in offending him. As Gods univerſal Juſtice in Governing the world, will make as great a difference between the ſincerely Obedient and Diſobedient, as there is between Heaven and Hell; ſo Gods Paternal Juſtice in Governing his family, will make as wide a difference between the more Obedient children and the leſs Obedient, as is between

between his dreadfull frowns, and his joyous reviving ſmiles; or between his ſmarting Rod, or his encouraging Rewards. 11. If God ſhould give Aſſurance and Peace to the ſinning and leaſt obedient believers, he ſhould not fit his providential diſpoſals to their good. It is not that which their ſtate requires, nor would it tend to their Cure any more then a healing Plaiſter to a ſore that is rotten in the bottom, or a Cordial to the removall of a cacochymy, or the purging out of corrupt redundant humours. They are ſo inclined to the Lethargy of ſecurity, that they have need of continual pinching, ſtriking or loud calling-on, to keep them waking: (ſtill remember, that by this weak Chriſtian, I mean not every doubting diſtreſſed ſoul, that is weak in their own apprehenſion, and little in their own eyes, and poor in ſpirit: but I mean thoſe that have the leaſt meaſure of ſincere Love to Chriſt, and deſire after him, and tenderneſs of conſcience, and care to pleaſe God, and the greateſt meaſure of ſecurity, worldlineſs, pride, fleſh-pleaſing, and boldneſs in ſinning, which is conſiſtent with ſincerity in the faith.) I believe there is no father or mother that hath children to govern, but they know by experience, that there is a neceſſity of frowns and rods for the

the more disobedient; and that rewards and smiles are no cure for stubbornness or contempt. 12. Lastly, Do but well consider, what a solæcisme in Government it would be, and what desperate inconveniences it would have brought into the world, if God should but have set such a punctual landmark between his Kingdom and the Kingdom of Satan, as we are ready to dream of: If God should have said in his Word, just so oft a man may be drunk, or may murder, or commit adultery, or steal, or forswear himself, and yet be a true Christian and be saved! Or just so far a man may go in neglecting duty to God and man, and in cherishing his flesh, hiding his sin, *&c.* and yet be a true Believer and be saved. This would 1. Embolden men in sinning, and make them think, I may yet venture, for I stand on safe ground: 2. And it would hinder Repentance: Indeed it would be the way to rob God of his honour; and multiply provocations against him, and keep his children in disobedience, and hinder their growth in holiness, and cause a deformity in Christs body, and a shame to his Religion and sacred name. As for those that say, *Assurance never encourageth men in sin, but tends to destroy it.* I answer, It is true of Gods Assurance, seasonably given to those that are

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fit for it, and used by them accordingly: But if God should have told all the world, just how far they may sin, and yet be certain of salvation, this would have bred Assurance in those that were unfit for it, and it would have been but the putting of new wine into old crackt bottles, or a new piece into an old garment, that would break them, or make worse the rent. I must therefore freely tell these objectors (I am sorry that so many of my old acquaintance now harp so much on this Antinomian string) that ignorance or error hath so blinded them, that they have forgotten, or know not 1. What an imperfect piece the best is in this life, much more the worst true Christian. 2. Nor what a subtil Devil we have to tempt us. 3. Nor what an active thing corruption is, and what advantage it will take on unseasonable Assurance. 4. Nor what the nature of Grace and Sanctification is; and how much of it lies in a godly jealousie of our selves and apprehension of our danger, and that *the fear of God is the beginning of wisedom*, See *Heb.*4.1. Nay 5. They have forgotten what a man is, and how inseparable from his nature is the Principle of self-preservation, and how necessary the apprehension of danger and the fear of evil to himself, is to the avoiding of that evil, and so to his preservation.

tion. 8. Yea if they knew but what a Commonwealth or a family is, they would know that fear of evil, and desire of self-preservation, is the very motive to Associations, and the groundwork of all Laws and Government, and a great part of the life of all Obedience.

And thus I have fully proved to you, *That the smallest measure of Grace, cannot help men to Assurance, in Gods ordinary way.*

Perhaps you will say, What comfort is there in this to a poor weak Christian? This is rather the way to put him quite out of heart and hope. I answer. No such matter: I shall shew you the uses of this observation in the following Directions. In the mean time I will say but this, *The expectations of unseasonable Assurance and out of Gods way, is a very great cause of keeping many in languishing and distress, and of causing others to turn Antinomians, and snatch at comforts, which God never gave them, and to feign and frame an Assurance of their own making, or build upon the delusions of the great Deceiver, transforming himself into an Angel of Light.*

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DIRECTION XIII.

13. *From the last mentioned Observation, there is one plain Consectary arising, which I think you may do well to note by the way*, viz. *That* According to Gods ordinary way of giving Grace, it cannot be expected that Christians should be able to know the very time of their first receiving or acting true saving Grace, or just when they were Pardoned, Justified, Adopted and put into a state of Salvation.

THis must needs be undeniable, if you grant the former Point, *That the least measure of Grace, yieldeth not Assurance of its sincerity* (which is proved:) and withall if you grant this plain truth, *That it is Gods ordinary way, to give a small measure of Grace at the first.* This I prove thus: 1. Christ likeneth Gods Kingdom of Grace to a grain of mustard seed, which is at first the least of all seeds, but after cometh to a tree: And to a little leaven, which leaveneth the whole lump: I will not deny but this may be applied

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to the visible progress of the Gospel and increase of the Church: but it is plainly appliable also to the Kingdom of Christ within us. 2. The Scripture oft calleth such young beginners, Babes, Children, Novices, *&c.* 3. We are all commanded still *to grow in Grace*; which implieth that we have our smallest measure at the first. 4. *Heb.* 5. 12. sheweth, that strength of Grace should be according to time and means. 5. Common experience is an invincible argument for this. Men are at a distance from Christ when he first calleth them to come to him: and many steps they have *Toward* him before they reach *To* him. We are first so far enlightned as to see our sin and misery, and the meaning and truth of the Gospel, and so rowsed out of our security, and made to look about us, and see that we have souls to save or lose, and that it is no jesting matter to be a Christian: and so we come to understand the tenour of the Covenant, and Christs termes of saving men: But alas how long is it usually after this, before we come sincerely to yield to his termes, and take him as he is offered, and Renounce the World, Flesh and the Devil, and Give up our selves to him in a faithfull Covenant! We are long deliberating before we can get our backward hearts to Resolve. How then should a man know just when he was past

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the higheſt ſtep of common or preparative Grace, and arived at the firſt ſtep of ſpecial Grace?

Yet mark, that I here ſpeak only of Gods ordinary way of giving Grace: For I doubt not but in ſome God may give a higher Degree of Grace at the firſt day of their converſion, then ſome others do attain in many years. And thoſe may know the time of their true Converſion, both becauſe the effect was ſo diſcernable, and becauſe the ſuddenneſs makes the change more ſenſible and obſervable.

But this is not the ordinary courſe. Ordinarily Convictions lye long on the ſoul before they come to a true Converſion. Conſcience is wounded, and ſmarting long, and long grudging againſt our ſinfull and negligent courſes, and telling us of the Neceſſity of Chriſt and a holy life, before we ſincerely obey Conſcience, and give up our ſelves to Chriſt. We ſeldom yield to the firſt conviction or perſwaſion. The Fleſh hath uſually too long time given it to plead its own Cauſe; and to ſay to the Soul, *Wilt thou forſake all thy pleaſure and merry company and courſes? Wilt thou beggar thy ſelf? or make thy ſelf a ſcorn and mocking ſtock to the World? Art thou ever able to hold out in ſo ſtrict a courſe? and to be undone? and to forſake all,*

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and lay down thy life for Christ? Is it not better venture thy self in the same way as thou hast gone in, as well as others do, and as so many of thy forefathers have done before thee? Under such sinfull Deliberations as these we usually continue long before we fully Resolve: And many demurres and delayes we make before we conclude to take Christ on the terms that he is offered to us. Now I make no doubt but most or many Christians can remember how and when God stirred their Consciences and wakened them from their security, and made them look about them, and roused them out of their natural Lethargy: Some can tell what Sermon first did it: Others can remember by what degrees and steps God was doing it long: The ordinary way appointed by God for the doing of it first, is the instruction of Parents: And (as I have fullier manifested in my Book of *Infant Baptism*) if Parents would do their duties, they would find, that *The Word* publikely preached was not appointed to be the first ordinary means of Conversion and Sanctification; but commonly, Grace would be received in childhood: I speak not of Baptismal Relative Grace, consisting in the pardon of Original sin; nor yet any infusion of Habits before they have the use of reason (because I suppose it is hid from us, what

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God doth in that.) But I ſpeak of actual Converſion: and I prove that this ſhould be the firſt ordinary way and time of Converſion to the children of true Chriſtians, becauſe it is the firſt means that God hath appointed to be uſed with them. *Deut.*6. 6, 7,8. *Eph.* 6.4. Parents are commanded to teach their children the Law of God, urgently, at home and as they walk abroad, lying down and riſing up; and to bring them up in the admonition and nurture of the Lord: and to train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and then when they are old they will not depart from it, *Prov.*22.6. And children are commanded to *Remember their Creator in the dayes of their youth,* Eccleſ.12.1. And if this be Gods firſt great means, then doubtleſs he will ordinarily bleſs his own means here, as well as in the Preaching of the Word.

From all this I would have you learn this leſſon: That *you ought not to trouble your ſelf with fears and doubts leſt you are not truly Regenerate, becauſe you know not the Sermon or the very time and manner of your Converſion: but finde that you have grace, and then, though you know not juſt the time or manner of your receiving of it, yet you may nevertheleſs be Aſſured of Salvation by it.* Search therefore what you are, and how your will is diſ-

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poſed and reſolved, and how your Life is ordered, rather then to know how you became ſuch. I know the workings of the Spirit on the ſoul may be diſcerned, becauſe they ſtir up diſcernable Actings in our own ſpirits. The ſouls Convictions, Conſideration, Reſolutions and Affections are no inſenſible things: But yet the work of Grace uſually begins in common Grace, and ſo proceeds by degrees till it come to ſpecial ſaving Grace, even as the work of nature doth, firſt producing the matter and then introducing the form; firſt producing the *embryo*, before it introduce a Rational ſoul. And as no child knows the time or manner of his own Formation, Vivification or Reception of that ſoul, ſo I think, few true Believers can ſay, Juſt ſuch a day, or at ſuch a Sermon I became a true Juſtified, ſanctified man. That was the hour of your true Converſion and Juſtification, *When you firſt preferred God and Chriſt and Grace before all things in this World, and deliberately and ſeriouſly Reſolved to take Chriſt for your Saviour and Governour, and give up your ſelf to him to be ſaved, taught and governed, and to obey him faithfully to the death againſt all Temptations, whatſoever you ſhould loſe or ſuffer by it.* Now I would but ask thoſe very Chriſtians that think they do know the very Sermon that converted them, Did that Sermon

Sermon bring you to this Resolution? Or was it not only some troubling, rowsing preparation hereto? I think some desperate sickness or the like Affliction is a very usual means to bring Resolutions to be downright and fixed, with many souls that long delayed and fluctuated in unresolvedness, and lay under meer uneffectual Convictions.

Obj. But this runs on your own grounds, that saving Grace and common Grace do differ but in degrees.

Answ. I think most will confess that as to the Acts of Grace, and that is it that we are now enquiring after; and that is all the means that we have of discerning the Habits: Yet remember that I still tell you, That *there is a specifical Moral difference, though grounded but in a gradual Natural difference.* Yea and that one grain of the Spirits working, which turns the Will in a prevalent measure for Christ, (together with the illumination necessary thereto) deserves all those elogies and high titles that are given it in the Word; so great a change doth it make in the soul! Well may it be called, *The New Creature: Born of the Spirit: The Workmanship of God: The new Life:* yea *The Image of God,* and *The Divine Nature* (if that Text be not meant of the Divine Nature in Christ which we are Relatively made partakers of in our Union

Union with him.) When you are weighing things in the balance, you may add grain after grain, and it makes no turning or motion at all, till you come to the very last grain, and then suddenly that end which was downward is turned upward. When you stand at a loss between two highwayes, not knowing which way to go, as long as you are deliberate, you stand still: All the Reasons that come into your minde, do not stir you: But the last Reason which Resolves you, setteth you in motion. So is it in the change of a sinners heart and life: He is not changed (but preparing towards it) while he is but Deliberating, Whether he should choose Christ or the world? But the last Reason that comes in and Determineth his Will to Christ, and makes him resolve and enter a firm Covenant with Christ, and say, *I will have Christ for Better or Worse,* this maketh the greatest change that ever is made by any work in this world. For how can there be greater then the turning of a soul from the creature to the Creator? so distant are the Terms of this change. After this one Turning act Christ hath that Heart, and the main bent and endeavours of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new End, a new Rule and Guide, and a new Master. Before the Flesh and the Devil were his Masters,

ſters, and now Chriſt is his Maſter. So that you muſt not think ſo meanly of the Turning, Determining, Reſolving act of Grace, becauſe it lieth but in a gradual difference naturally from common Grace, If a Prince ſhould offer a condemned beggar to marry her, and pardon her, and make her his Queen; Her Deliberation may be the way to her Conſent, and one Reaſon after another may bring her near to conſenting. But it is that which turns her Will to Conſent, Reſolve, Covenant and Deliver her ſelf to him, which makes the great change in her ſtate. Yet all the foregoing Work of common Grace hath a hand in the change, though only the turning Reſolution do effect it: It is the reſt with this that doth it: As when the laſt grain turns the ſcales, the former do concurre. I will conclude with Dr *Preſtons* words in his Golden Scepter, *pag.* 210. Obj. *It ſeems then that the knowledge of a carnal man and of a Regenerate man do differ but in Degrees, and not in kind.* Anſ. *The want of Degrees here alter the kind. As in Numbers the Addition of a Degree alters the ſpecies and kind.* Reade for this alſo D. *Jackſon* of ſaving faith, §. 3. *ch.* 3. *pag.* 297, 298. and frequently in other places. So much of that obſervation.

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DIRECTION XIV.

14. *Yet further I would have you to understand this: That* As the leaſt meaſure of Saving Grace is ordinarily undiſcernable from the greateſt meaſure of common Grace, (notwithſtanding the greatneſs of the change that it makes) ſo a meaſure ſomewhat greater is ſo hardly diſcernable, that it ſeldom brings Aſſurance: And therefore it is only the ſtronger Chriſtians that attain Aſſurance ordinarily; even thoſe, who have a great degree of Faith and Love, and keep them much in exerciſe, and are very watchfull and carefull in Obedience: And conſequently (moſt Chriſtians being of the weaker ſort) it is but few that do attain to Aſſurance of their Juſtification and Salvation.

HEre are two or three points which I would have you diſtinctly to obſerve, though I lay them all together for brevity.

1. That it is only a greater measure of Grace that will ordinarily afford Assurance. 2. That therefore it is only the stronger and holier and more obedient sort of Christians that usually reach to a Certainty of Salvation. 3. That few Christians do reach to a strong or high degree of Grace. 4. And therefore it is but few Christians that reach to Assurance.

For the two first of these it will evidently appear that they are true, by reviewing the Reasons which I gave of the last point save one. He that will attain to a Certainty of Salvation, must 1. Have a large measure of Grace to be discerned. 2. He must have that Grace much in Action, and lively Action: For it is not meer Habits that are discernable. 3. He must have a clear understanding to be acquainted with the Nature of Spiritual things: To know what is a sound evidence, and how to follow the search, and how to repell particular Temptations. 4. He must have a good acquaintance and familiarity with his own heart: and to that end must be much at home, and be used sometime to a diligent observation of his heart and waies. 5. He must be in a good measnre acquainted with, and a Conquerour of contradicting Temptations. 6. He must have some competent cure of the deep Deceitfulness of the heart,

heart, and it must be brought to an open, plain, ingenuous frame, willing to know the worst of it self. 7. He must have some cure of that ordinary confusion and tumultuous disorder that is in the thoughts and affections of men: and get things into an order in his minde. 8. He must be a man of Diligence, Resolution, and unwearied Patience, that will Resolvedly set on the work of self-examination, and painfully watch in it, and constantly follow it from time to time till he attain a Certainty. 9. He must be one that is very fearfull of sinning, and carefull in close obedient walking with God, and much in sincere and spiritual duty, that he keep not conscience still in accusing and condemning him, and God still offended with him, and his wounds fresh bleeding, and his Soul still smarting. 10. He must be a man of much fixedness and constancy of minde, and not of the ordinary mutability of mankinde; that so he may not by remitting his zeal and diligence, lose the sight of his evidences, nor by leaving open his soul to an alteration by every new intruding thought and temptation, let go his Assurance as soon as he attaineth it. All these things in a good degree are Necessary to the attaining of Assurance of Salvation.

And then do I need to say any more to

the Confirmation of the third Point, That few Christians reach this measure of Grace? O that it were not as clear as the light, and as discernable as the earth under our feet, that most true Christians are weaklings and of the lower forms in the School of Christ! Alas, how ignorant are most of the best? How little Love, or Faith, or Zeal, or heavenly-mindedness, or Delight in God, have they? How unacquainted with a frequent exercise of these Graces? How unacquainted with the way of self-examination? and how backward to it? and how dull and careless in it? doing it by the halves, as *Laban* searched *Rachels* Tent? How easily put off with an excuse? How little acquainted with their own hearts? or with Satans temptations, and waies of deceiving? how much deceitfulness remaineth in their hearts? how confused are their mindes? and what distractions and tumults are there in their thoughts? how bold are they in sinning? and how little tenderness of Conscience, and care of obeying have they? how frequently do they wound Conscience, provoke God, and obscure their Evidences? and how mutable are their Apprehensions? and how soon do they lose that Assurance which they once attain? and upon every occasion quite lose the sight of their evidences? yea and Remit their actual

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Resolutions, and so lose much of the Evidence it self? Is not this the common case of Godly people? O that we could truly deny it: Let their lives be witness, let their visible neglects, worldliness, pride, impatiency of plain Reproof, remisness of Zeal, dullness and customarines in Duty, strangeness to God, unwillingness to secret Prayer and Meditation, unacquaintedness with the Spirits operations and joyes, their unpeaceableness one with another, and their too frequent blemishing the glory of their holy Profession by the unevenness of their walking, let all these witness, whether the School of Christ have not most children in it: and how few of them ever go to the *University* of riper knowledge? and how few of those are fit to begin here the works of their Priestly Office, which they must live in for ever? in the high and joyfull Praises of God and of the Lamb, who hath Redeemed them by his Blood, and made them Kings and Priests to God, that they may Reign with him for ever? I am content to stand to the Judgement of all humble self-knowing Christians, whether this be not true of most of themselves? and for those that deny it, I will stand to the Judgement of their Godly neighbors, who perhaps know them better then they know themselves.

And then this being all so, the fourth point is undeniable, That *It is but very few Christians that reach to Assurance of Salvation.* If any think (as intemperate hot spirited men are like enough to charge me) that in all this I countenance the Popish doctrine of Doubting and Uncertainty, and contradict the common doctrine of the Reformed Divines that Write against them; I answer, 1. I do contradict both the Papists that deny Assurance, and many forreign Writers who make it farre more Easie, Common, and Necessary then it is (much more both them and the Antinomists, who place Justifying faith in it.) But I stand in the midst between both extreams; and I think I have the company of most English Divines. 2. I come not to be of this minde meerly by reading Books, but mainly, by reading my own heart, and consulting my own experience, and the experience of a very great number of Godly people of all sorts, who have opened their hearts to me, for almost twenty years time. 3. I would intreat the gainsayers to study their own hearts better for some considerable time, and to be more in hearing the case and complaints of Godly people; and by that time they may happily come to be of my minde. 4. See whether all those Divines that have been very practical, and successfull

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in the work of God, and much acquainted with the way of the Recovery of lost souls, be not all of the same Judgement as I in this point, (such as *T. Hooker, Jo. Rogers, Preston, Sibs, Bolton, Dod, Culverwell*, &c.) And whither the confidentest men for the contrary be not those that study Books more then hearts, and spend their daies in Disputing, and not in winning souls to God from the world.

Lastly, Let me add to what is said, these two Proofs of this fourth Point here asserted.

1. The constant experience of the greatest part of Believers, tels us, that Certainty of salvation is very rare. Even of those that live comfortably and in peace of Conscience, yet very few of them do attain to a Certainty. For my part, it is known that God in undeserved Mercy hath given me long the society of a great number of Godly people, and great interest in them, and privacy with them, and opportunity to know their mindes, and this in many places (my station by providence having been oft removed:) and I must needs profess, that of all these I have met with few, yea very few indeed, that if I seriously and privately asked them, *Are you Certain that you are a true Believer, and so are Justified and shall be Saved*, durst say to me,

I am Certain of it. But some in great doubts and fears: most too secure and neglective of their states, without Assurance, and some in so good hopes (to speak in their own language) as calmeth their spirits, that they can comfortably cast themselves on God in Christ. And those few that have gone so far beyond all the rest, as to say, *They were Certain of their sincerity and salvation,* were the Professors whose state I suspected more then any of the rest; as being the most proud, self-conceited, censorious, passionate, unpeaceable sort of Professors: and some of them living scandalously, and some fallen since to more scandalous waies then ever: And the most of their humble, godly acquaintance or neighbours suspected them as well as I. Or else some very few of them that said they were Certain, were honest godly people (most women) of smal Judgement and strong Affections; who depended most on that which is commonly called *The sense or feeling of Gods Love*; and were the lowest at some times, as they were the highest at other times: and they that were one moneth certain to be saved, perhaps the next moneth were almost ready to say, they should certainly be damned. So that taking out all these sorts of persons, the sober, solid, judicious Believers, that could groundedly and ordinarily

narily say, *I am Certain that I shall be Saved*, have been so few, that it is sad to me to consider it. If any other mens experiences be contrary, I am glad of it; so be it they be Sober Judicious men able to gather experiences; and so they live not among meer Antinomians, and take not the discovery of their meer opinion, for a discovery of experience. For I have seen in divers professors of my long acquaintance, the strange power of Opinion and Phantasie in this thing. I have known those that have lived many years in doubting of their Salvation, and all that while walked uprightly; and in the late Warres, falling into the company of some Anabaptists, they were by them perswaded that there was no right way to their comfort but by being Re-baptized, and associating themselves with the Re-baptized Church, and abstaining from the hearing of the Unbaptized Parish Priests (as they called them) No sooner was this done, but all their former doubtings and troubles were over, and they were as comfortable as any others (as themselves affirmed) which no doubt proceeded from, partly the strength of Phantasie conceiting it should so be, and partly from the Novelty of their way which delighted them, and partly from the strong Opinion they had that this was the way of Salvation,

and that the want of this did keep them in the dark so long, and partly from Satans policy, who troubleth people least, when they are in a way that pleaseth him: But when these people had lived a year or two in this comfortable condition, they fell at last into the society of some Libertines or Familists, who believe that the Scriptures are all but a dream, fiction or Allegory: These presently perswaded them, that they were fools to regard Baptism or such Ordinances, and that they might come to hear again in our Congregations, seeing all things were lawfull, and there was no Heaven or Hell but within men, and therefore they should look to their safety and credit in the world, and take their pleasure. This lesson was quickly learned, and then they cried down the Anabaptists, and confessed they were deluded, and so, being grown loose while they were Anabaptists, to mend the matter, they grew Epicures when they had been instructed by the Libertines, and this was the end of their new gotten comfort. Others I have known that have wanted Assurance, and falling among the Antinomians, were told by them that they undid themselves by looking after Signs and Marks of Grace, and so laying their comforts upon something in themselves: whereas they should look only to Christ for Comfort,

fort, and not at any thing in themſelves at all: and for Aſſurance, it is only the Witneſs of the Spirit without any Marks, that muſt give it them; and to fetch Comfort from their own Graces and Obedience, was to make it themſelves in ſtead of Chriſt and the holy Ghoſt, and was a Legal way: No ſooner was this Doctrine received, but the Receivers had Comfort at will, and all was ſealed up to them preſently by the Witneſs of the Spirit in their own Conceits: Whence this came, judge you: I told you my judgement before. Sure I am that the ſudden looſeneſs of their lives, anſwering their ignorant, looſe, ungoſpel-like doctrine, did certifie me that the Spirit of Comfort was not their Comforter: For he is alſo a Spirit of Holineſs, and comforteth men by the means of a holy Goſpel, which hath precepts and threatnings as well as Promiſes.

2. And as the experience of the ſtate of Believers aſſureth us that few of them attain to Certainty; ſo experience of the imperfection of their underſtandings ſhews us that few of them are immediatly capable of it. For how few Believers be there that underſtand well, what is a ſound evidence, and what not? Nay how many Learned men have taught them, That the leaſt unfeigned Deſire of Grace, is the Grace it ſelf (as ſome ſay)

ſay) or at leaſt a certain evidence of it (as others ſay:) Whereas, alas, how many have unfeignedly deſired many Graces, and yet have Deſired the Glory and Profits of the world ſo much more, that they have miſcarried and periſhed? How many have taught them that the leaſt unfeigned Love to God, or to the Brethren, is a certain Mark of ſaving Grace? Whenas many a one hath unfeignedly loved God and the Brethren, who yet have loved houſe, land, credit, pleaſure, and life ſo much more, that God hath been thruſt as it were into a corner, and hath had but the worlds leavings; and the poor Saints have had little compaſſion or relief from them, nor would be lookt on in times of danger and diſgrace. As *Auſtin* and the Schoolmen uſe to ſay, Wicked men do *Uti Deo & frui creaturis, Uſe God and enjoy the creatures:* Godly men do *Frui Deo, & uti creaturis, Enjoy God and uſe the creatures.* The meaning is, Both Regenerate and Unregenerate have ſome Will or Love, both to God and to the Creature: But the wicked do Will or Love the Creature as their chief Good with their chiefeſt Love, and they only Love God as a Means to help them to the Creature, with a Love ſubordinate to their Love to the Creature: Whereas the Godly do Will or Love God as their chief Good, with

with their chiefeſt Love or Complacency, and Love the Creature but as a Means to God, with an inferiour Love.

If then the Nature of Sincerity be ſo little known, then Aſſurance of Sincerity cannot be very common. More might be ſaid to prove that Certainty of Salvation is not common among true Chriſtians; but that it is labour in vain, as to them, ſeeing experience and their own ready confeſſion doth witneſs it.

Now what's the uſe that I would have you make of this? Why it is this: If Aſſurance of Sincerity and Juſtification (much more of Salvation) be ſo rare among true Chriſtians, then you have no cauſe to think that the want of it proveth you to be no true Chriſtian. You ſee then that a man may be in a ſtate of Salvation without it; and that it is not Juſtifying Faith, as ſome have imagined, nor yet a neceſſary concomitant of that Faith. You ſee that you were miſtaken in thinking that you had not the Spirit of Adoption, becauſe you had no aſſuring witneſs within you effectively teſtifying to you that you are the childe of God. All Gods children have the Spirit of Adoption: (For becauſe they are ſons, therefore hath God ſent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they cry *Abba Father*, Gal. 4.6.)

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But all Gods children have not Assurance of their Adoption; therefore the Spirit of Adoption doth not alwaies assure those of their Adoption in whom it abideth. It is alwaies a witness-bearer of their Adoption: But that is only objectively by his Graces and operations in them; as a Land-mark is a witness whose Land it is where it standeth: or as your Sheep-mark witnesseth which be your Sheep: or rather as a sensible Soul witnesseth a living Creature, or a rational Soul witnesseth that we are Men: But efficiently it doth not alwaies witness: as a Land-mark or Sheep-mark is not alway discerned: and a bruit knows not it self to be a bruit: and a man is not alwaies actually knowing his own humanity, nor can know it at all in the Womb, in Infancy, in Distraction, in an Epilepsie, Apoplexie or the like disease which depriveth him of the use of reason. Besides, it's no doubt, but the Apostle had some respect to the eminent gift of the Spirit, for Tongues, Prophecies, Miracles and the like which was proper to that age; though still as including the Spirit of Holiness.

You see then that you need not be alwaies in disquiet when you want Assurance: For else how disquiet a life should most Christians live! I shall shew you more anon that

that all a mans comforts depend not so on his Assurance, but that he may live a comfortable life without it: Trouble of minde may be overcome; Conscience may be quieted; True peace attained, yea a man may have that Joy in the holy Ghost, wherein the Kingdom of God is said to consist, without Certainty of Salvation. (If there be any passage in my Book of *Rest*, Part 3d, in pressing to get Assurance, which seem contrary to this, I desire that they may be reduced to this sense, and no otherwise understood.) This shall be further opened anon, and other grounds of comfort manifested, besides Assurance.

DIRE;

DIRECTION XV.

15. *Yea this much more I would here inform you of, That* Very many even of the ſtronger, holier, watchfull, and obedient Chriſtians, are yet uncertain of their Salvation, even then when they are Certain of their Juſtification and Sanctification; and that becauſe they are uncertain of their perſeverance and overcoming: For a mans Certainty of his Salvation can be no ſtronger than is his Certainty of enduring to the end and overcoming.

THat you may not miſunderſtand me in this, obſerve 1. That I do not ſay Perſeverance is a thing uncertain in it ſelf: 2. Nor that it is uncertain to all Chriſtians: 3. But that it is uncertain to many even ſtrong and ſelf-knowing Chriſtians. Divines uſe to diſtinguiſh of the Certainty of the Object, and of the Subject: and the former is either of the Object of Gods Knowledge, or

or of mans. I doubt not but God knows Certainly who shall be saved, which with his Decree doth cause that which we call Certainty of the Object, as to mans understanding: But men themselves do not alwaies know it.

If a man have the fullest Certainty in the world that he is Gods child, yet if he be uncertain whether he shall so continue to the end, it is impossible that he should have a Certainty of his Salvation. For it's he only that endureth to the end that shall be saved.

Now that many eminent Christians of great knowledge and much zeal and obedience are uncertain of their Perseverance, is proved by two Infallible Arguments. 1. By experience: If any should be so censorious as to think that none of all those Nations and Churches abroad that deny the Doctrine of Certain Perseverance of all Believers, have any strong Christians among them, yet we have had the knowledge of such at home. 2. Besides the Difficulty of the Subject is a clear Argument that a strong Christian may be uncertain of it. God hath made all those points plain in Scripture, which must be Believed as of Necessity to Salvation: But the Certainty of all Believers Perseverance, is not a Point

of

of flat Neceſſity to Salvation to be Believed. Otherwiſe it would be a hard matter to prove that any conſiderable number were ever ſaved, till of late; or are yet ſaved, but in a very few Countries. It is a Point that the Churches never did put into their Creed; where they ſummed up thoſe Points that they held neceſſary to Salvation. There are a great number of Texts of Scripture which ſeeming to intimate the contrary, do make the Point of great Difficulty to many of the wiſeſt. And thoſe Texts that are for it, are not ſo expreſs as fully to ſatisfie them. Beſides that the examples of theſe ten years laſt paſt have done more to ſtagger many ſober wiſe Chriſtians in this Point, then all the Arguments that ever were uſed by Papiſts, Arminians or any other: To ſee what kinde of men in ſome places have fallen, and how far; as I am unwilling further to mention.

If you ask me, what I think of this my ſelf, and conſequently what Aſſurance I have of my own Salvation; I will freely tell you, both how far I am arrived in Aſſurance of Sincerity of Grace and Juſtification, and how farre in the matter of Perſeverance and ſo of Salvation. I lay ſeven years under great Doubtings of the truth of my Sanctification; eſpecially for want of

of those Lively, Affectionate, Heart-melting effects which I desired to have found; and for want of Deeper apprehensions of God, Christ, Glory, Sin, Misery, Mercy, Duty, *&c.* which made me still fear that all I had was but the meer effects of Education, Reading and Speculative Knowledge; and so that I had only a Notional Religion, that touched my Phantasie and swom in my Brain, but workt not throughly on my Heart; for want of more Deep and Serious Believing of those holy Truths which should be operative. Yet all this while, Probabilities of Grace, affording me that which we commonly call *Hope*, did bear me up. Now through the great unspeakable Mercy of my God, I have attained to so strong a Probability of my Sincerity and Sanctification, as in a large sense may be called Assurance or Certainty, but not in the strictest sense: much less is it a perfect Assurance: I have so strong a perswasion of the truth of my Faith, and so of the pardon of my sinnes, as overcometh most doubtings and trouble of minde, and keepeth me in quietness and peace of minde, and some Joy in the holy Ghost, and Delightfull thoughts of my everlasting Rest; and gives me a Confidence in God, and Access with boldness to the Throne of his Grace.

Grace. But yet I finde that carnal ſecurity hath a great hand in the alaying of my troubles, though not in the raiſing of my Joyes: (And it is no unuſual thing for a good Cauſe and a bad Faith, Aſſurance and Carnal ſecurity to joyn together in one effect; even in expelling trouble from the heart.) Yet dare I ſcarce ſay (in the uſual ſenſe of the word,) that *I am certain of my Sincerity and ſo of my Juſtification:* eſpecially when Temptations have prevailed, and the ſtrength of the fleſhes intereſt, and the weakneſs of Chriſts intereſt in my Eſtimation and Will and Affections, have appeared more then ordinary: And when I have thought how much ſtronger Trials I may yet be put to, which others daily undergo: eſpecially the Temptations of Proſperity do oftner make me fear, then thoſe of perſecution and adverſity. I am ſometimes afraid, leſt it be but the weakneſs of my Body, and the diſtance of Objects, and ſmalneſs of Temptations, that makes them no more prevailing with me: And that if I had as ſtrong a body as others, and were in that Dignity, Wealth and Abundance of all things, as ſome are; whether Honors, Carnal Pleaſures, Sports, Delightfull Meats, Drinks, Beauty, and ſuch vanities might not carry me away, as I ſee they do others, that

that made as great a ſhew of Holineſs. Yet do not theſe doubts much affright or diſquiet me, becauſe I finde God at preſent poſſeſſing me with thoſe Reſolutions to caſt away all for Chriſt, which, I doubt not, are the work of his own Grace, and becauſe I have experience of abundance of preventing and ſuſtaining Grace; and becauſe I finde at the preſent that God enableth me to account all things loſs and droſs and dung for him, and eaſily without much reluctancy to empty my purſe for him and his poor, and to lay out my time and ſtrength for him and his Church, and with ſome good ſucceſs to reſiſt Temptations; and that I have no Deſire, (in any activity or prevalency) to be any higher in the world then I am, but think God hath choſen out for me the beſt condition and ſtation that I could have deſired in all the world. And then for Perſeverance and Salvation, this is my Caſe: It is my ſtrong opinion that no man who hath attained to a Rootedneſs in the Faith, and ſo is throughly ſanctified, doth ever totally and finally fall away: which Chriſt ſeemeth to intimate in ſaying that the Cauſe why men fall away in Tribulation and Perſecution, is becauſe the ſeed had not deep Rooting, *Mat.*13. And I am yet more confident that none of the

Elect

Elect ſhall ever fall away; and perſwaded, that all the Rooted, through-Chriſtians, are Elect. But yet I dare not ſay, that *I am Certain of this*, that all are elect to ſalvation, and ſhall never fall away totally and finally, who ſincerely Believe and are Juſtified. It is my opinion, but I dare not put it into my Creed among either the Points of abſolute Neceſſity, or undoubted Verity. I know how many Texts of Scripture ſeem to ſpeak otherwiſe: and I know how generally the Primitive Fathers thought otherwiſe, if a man can know their mindes by their Writings: I know that *Auſtin* himſelf, the Mall of the Pelagians, ſeems to be either unreſolv'd, or more againſt this Perſeverance then for it. I know how many Learned, Godly men do differ from me, and deny the Certainty of Perſeverance: I know how ſad and ſhaking examples this age hath afforded: And therefore I am not Certain, properly, ſtrictly Certain, of my Perſeverance, and ſo not fully, ſtrictly Certain of my Salvation: Nor ſo near to a Certainty of my Salvation, as I am to a Certainty of my Faith, Juſtification, Adoption and Sanctification. Yet am I ſo ſtrongly confident of it, (that I ſhall hold out, and be ſaved) that it doth not only calm and quiet my minde, and overcome my troubles and fears,

fears, but also enable me to Rejoyce in Hope of the Glory to come, and to Desire Christs coming to Judgement, and to think of Death with much more contentedness and submission then else I should do: For as I am much perswaded that the Rooted in Grace do never fall quite away, so if I were sure that they did, yet I know so much of the Graciousness of Gods Nature, and his Covenant, that he will not forsake any that do not wilfully forsake him; and I have so full a Resolution to cleave to him wrought in me by his Spirit, and such experience of tender Love, and his preserving me in Trials, that I have a strong confidence that he will never permit me to fall from him. Yet do I see a Necessity of daily praying to him *Not to Lead me into Temptation, but to Deliver me from the evil*; and to live in continual watchfulness, expecting daily Assaults, and renewing daily my Repentance and Resolutions.

Thus have I, as truly as I am now able, opened my very heart and state to you, as before the Searcher of my heart: which I have done for three Reasons. 1. That my Judgement may be truly known in the Point of Perseverance. 2. Because I finde the communicating of Experiences of each others hearts and states is of great use to Believers.

lievers. 3. Becauſe I finde that many Godly people, by divers paſſages in my Book of *Reſt*, about Living in *Heavenly Delights*, do think that I have attained a greater Certainty then I have: and that themſelves are unhappy and muſt live uncomfortably till they can attain to that which they think I have done. As for thoſe that think, and will be ready to ſay, that I am warping to Arminian or Popiſh Doubting; I regard not their words or cenſures: I am none of thoſe that dare in the hearing of God affirm that I have the Certainty which I have not, meerly to avoid the ſuſpition of erring. Nor dare I by hot Diſputes maintain that which the conſtant Experience of my ſelf and the beſt and moſt of my acquaintance doth contradict: and believe my Authors before my own heart, and the undoubted teſtimony of Chriſtians concerning themſelves. Yet remember that I do not deny but many others may have both more Aſſurance of their own Sincerity, and more clear underſtanding of the Doctrine of Perſeverance then I have; which may give them a Certainty that no true Believer ſhall quite fall away. I dare not think that others have not a higher degree of Light and Certainty then I have.

But I think by this time I have perſwaded you

you that a proper Certainty of our Salvation is not so common a thing as some Controversal Doctors, or some self-conceited Professors do take it to be. And therefore that you must not lay all your comfort on your Assurance of Salvation. As for them who are most highly confident both of the Doctrine of the Certain Perseverance of every Believer, meerly upon tradition, and prejudice, because they have been alway taught so, or else upon weak grounds which will not bear them out in their confidence; and are as confident of their own Salvation on as slender grounds, having never well understood the Nature of saving Grace, Sincerity, Examination nor Assurance; nor understood the Causes of doubting which might else have shaked them; I will not call their greatest Confidence, by the name of Assurance or Certainty of Salvation, though it be accompanied with never so great boastings, or pretenses or expressions of the highest Joyes. And for your self I advise you, first use those comforts which those may have who come short of Assurance.

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DIRECTION XVI.

16. *The next thing which I would have you learn is this, That* There are several grounds of the great Probability of our Salvation, besides the general grounds mentioned in the beginning: and by the Knowledge of these, without any further Assurance, a Christian may live in much Peace and Comfort, and in Delightfull, Desirous thoughts of the Glory to come: And therefore the next work which you have to do, is to discover those probabilites of your Sincerity and your Salvation, and then to receive the Peace and Comfort which they may afford you, before you can expect Assurance it self.

I Shall here open to you the several parts of this Proposition and Direction distinctly. 1. I told you in the beginning of the

the four grounds of Probability which all may have in general, from 1. The Nature of God, 2. And of the Mediatour; and his Office. 3. And the *universal* sufficiency of Christs satisfaction. 4. And the general tenour of the Promise and offer of Pardon and Salvation. Now I adde; that besides all these, there are many grounds of strong Probability which you may have of your own Sincerity, and so of your particular Interest in Christ and Salvation, when you cannot reach to a Certainty.

1. Some kinde of Probability you may gather by comparing your self with others. Though this way be but delusory to unregenerate men, whose confidence is plainly contradicted by the Scriptures, yet may it be lawfull and usefull to an humble soul that is willing to obey and wait on God: I mean, to consider, that if such as you should perish, how few people would God have in the world? Consider first in how narrow a compass the Church was confined before Christs coming in the flesh? and how carnal and corrupt even that visible Church then was? and even at this day, the most Learned do compute, that if you divide the world into thirty parts, nineteen of them are Heathenish Idolaters, six of them are Mahometans, and only five of

them are Christians. And of these five that are Christians, how great a part are of the Æthiopian, Greek and Popish Churches? so ignorant, rude and superstitious and erroneous, that salvation cannot be imagined to be near so easie or ordinary with them as with us: and of the Reformed Churches, commonly called Protestants, how small is the number? And even among these, What a number are grossely ignorant and prophane? and of those that profess more knowledge and zeal, how many are grossely Erroneous, Schismatical and Scandalous. How exceeding smal a number is left then that are such as you? I know this is no assuring Argument: but I know withall that Christ died not in vain; but he will see the fruit of his sufferings to the satisfaction of his soul: and the God of Mercy, who is a Lover of mankinde, will have a multitude innumerable of his saved ones in the earth.

2. But your strongest Probabilities are from the Consideration of the Work of God upon your Soul, and the present frame and inclination of your Soul to God. You may know that you have workings above nature in you; and that they have been kept alive and carried on these many years against all opposition of the flesh and the

the world: It hath not been a meer flash of conviction which hath been extinguished by sensuality, and left you in the darkness of security and prophanness as others are. You dare not give up your Hopes of Heaven for all the world: You would not part with Christ, and say, Let him go, for all the pleasures of sin, or treasures of the earth: If you had (as you have) an offer of God, Christ, Grace and Glory on one side, and worldly prosperity in sin on the other side, you would choose God, and let go the other. You dare not, you would not give over Praying, Hearing, Reading, and Christian company, and give up your self to worldly, fleshly pleasures; yet you are not Assured of salvation, because you finde not that Delight and Life in Duty, and that Witness of the Spirit, and that communion with God, nor that tenderness of heart, as you desire. It is well that you desire them: But though you be not Certain of Salvation, do not you see a great likelihood, a Probability in all this? Is not your heart raised to a Hope that yet God is mercifull to you, and means you good? Doubtless this you might easily discern.

The second thing that I am to shew you is, that there may much spiritual Comfort

and Peace of Conſcience be enjoyed without any Certainty of Salvation, given upon theſe forementioned Probabilities. Which I prove thus, 1. No doubt but *Adam* in innocency had Peace of Conſcience, and Comfort and Communion with God, and yet he had no Aſſurance of Salvation; I mean, either of continuing in Paradiſe, or being tranſlated to Glory. For if he had, either he was ſure to perſevere in Innocency and ſo to be glorified. (But that was not true) or elſe he muſt foreknow both that he ſhould fall and be raiſed again and ſaved by Chriſt. But this he knew not at all. 2. Experience tels us that the greateſt part of Chriſtians on earth do enjoy that Peace and Comfort which they have, without any Certainty of their Salvation. 3. The Nature of the thing telleth us, that a likelihood of ſo great a mercy as everlaſting Glory muſt needs be a ground of great Comfort. If a poor condemned priſoner do but hear that there is Hopes of a pardon, ſpecially if very probable, it will glad his heart. Indeed if an Angel from Heaven were brought into this ſtate it would be ſad to him: But if a devil or a condemned ſinner have ſuch Hope, it muſt needs be glad news to them. The devils have it not, but we have.

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3. Let me next therefore intreat you to take the Comfort of your Probabilities of Grace and Salvation. Your horſe or dog knoweth not how you will uſe them Certainly; yet will they lovingly follow you, and put their heads to your hand, and truſt you with their lives without fear, and love to be in your company; becauſe they have found you kinde to them, and have tried that you do them no hurt, but good: yea though you do ſtrike them ſometimes, yet they finde that they have their food from you, and your favour doth ſuſtain them. Yea your little children have no Certainty how you will uſe them; and yet finding that you have alwaies uſed them kindly, and expreſſed Love to them, though you whip them ſometimes, yet are glad of your company, and deſire to be in your lap, and can truſt themſelves in your hands, without tormenting themſelves with ſuch doubts as theſe, *I am uncertain how my mother will uſe me, Whether ſhe will Wound me, or kill me, or turn me out of doors and let me periſh.* Nature perſwades us not to be too diſtruſtfull of thoſe that have alwaies befriended us, and eſpecially whoſe Nature is Mercifull and Compaſſionate: Nor to be too ſuſpitious of evil from them that have alwaies done us good: Every man knows

that the Good will do good, and the Evil will do evil: ,and accordingly we expect that they ſhould do to us. Naturally we all fear a Toad, a Serpent, an Adder, a mad Dog, a wicked Man, a mad Man, a cruel bloodthirſty Tyrant, and the Devil: But no one fears a Dove, a Lamb, a good Man, a mercifull compaſſionate Governour, except only the Rebels or notorious offenders that know he is bound in juſtice to deſtroy or puniſh them. And none ſhould fear diſtruſtfully the wrath of a gracious God, but they who Will not ſubmit to his Mercy, and Will not have Chriſt to reign over them, and therefore may know that he is bound in Juſtice, if they come not in, to deſtroy them. But for you that would be Obedient and Reformed, and are troubled that you are no better, and beg of God to make you better, and have no ſin, but what you would be glad to be rid of, may not you, at leaſt, ſee a ſtrong Probability that it ſhall go well with you? O make uſe therefore of this Probability: and if you have but Hopes that God will do you good, rejoice in thoſe Hopes, till you can come to rejoyce in Aſſurance.

And here let me tell you that Probabilities are of divers Degrees according to their divers Grounds. Where men have but a little

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Probability of their Sincerity, and a greater Probability that they are not Sincere in the faith, these men may be somewhat born up, but it behoves them presently to search in fear, and to amend that which is the cause of their fear. Those that have more Probability of the Sincerity of their hearts, then of the contrary, may well have more peace then trouble of minde: Those that have yet a higher Degree of Probability may live in more Joy: and so according to the Degree of Probability may their Comforts still arise.

And observe also, that it is but the highest Degree of this Probability here which we call a *Certainty:* For it is a Moral Certainty, and not that which is called *a Certainty of Divine faith,* nor that which is called *a Certainty of evidence* in the strictest sense; though yet evidence there is for it: But it is the same evidences materially which are the ground of Probability and of Certainty: Only sometime they differ Gradually (one having more Grace and another less) and sometime not so neither: for he that hath more Grace may discern but a Probability in it (through some other defect) no more then he that hath less: But when one man discerns his Graces and Sincerity but darkly, he hath but a Probabi-

lity of Salvation manifested by them: and when another discerneth them more clearly, he hath a stronger Probability: and he that discerneth them most clearly (if other necessaries concurre) hath that which we call a Certainty.

Now I am perswaded that you frequently see a strong Probability of your Sincerity: and may not that be a very great stay and comfort to your soul? Nay may it not draw out your heart in Love, Delight and Thankfulness? Suppose that your name were written in a piece of paper, and put among a hundred, or fifty, or but twenty other like papers into a Lottery; and you were certain that you should be the owner of this whole Land except your name were drawn the first time, and if it were drawn, you should die: Would your Joy or your Sorrow for this be the greater? Nay if it were but ten to one, or but two to one odds on your side, it would keep you from drooping and discouragement: And why should it not do so in the present case?

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DIRECTION XVII.

17. *My next advice to you is this,* For the ſtrengthening your apprehenſions of the Probability of your Salvation. Gather up and improve all your choiceſt Experiences of Gods good will and mercy to you: And obſerve alſo the Experiments of others in the ſame kind.

WE do God and our ſelves a great deal of wrong by forgetting, neglecting and not improving our Experiences. How doth God charge it on the Iſraelites, eſpecially in the wilderneſs, that they forgot the Works of God, by which he had ſo often manifeſted his Power and Goodneſs? *Pſal.*78. & 107. ſee 105, 106. When God had by one Miracle ſilenced their unbelief, they had forgotten it in the next diſtreſs. It was a ſign the diſciples hearts were hardened when they forgot the Miracles of the loaves, and preſently after were diſtruſtfull and afraid, *Mar.* 6. 52. God doth

doth not give us his *mercies* only for the preſent *uſe*, but for the future: nor only for the body, but for the ſoul. I would this truth were well learned by Believers. You are in ſickneſs, in troubles, and dangers, and pinching ſtraits, in fears and anguiſh of minde: In this caſe you cry to God for help, and he doth in ſuch a manner deliver you, as ſilenceth your diſtruſt, and convinceth you of his love; at leaſt of his readineſs to do you good. What a wrong is it now to God and your ſelf to forget this preſently, and in the next temptation to receive no ſtrengthening by the conſideration of it? Doth God ſo much regard this dirty fleſh, that he ſhould do all this meerly for its eaſe and relief? No, he doth it to kill your unbelief, and convince you of his ſpecial Providence, his care of you, and love to you, and power to help you, and to breed in you more loving, honourable and thankfull thoughts of him: Loſe this benefit and you loſe all: You may thus uſe one and the ſame Mercy a hundred times. Though it be gone as to the body; it is ſtill freſh in a believing, thankfull, carefull ſoul. You may make as good uſe of it at your very death, as the firſt hour. But O the ſad forgetfulneſs, mutability and unbelief of theſe hearts of ours!

ours! What a number of these choice experiences do we all receive? When we forget one, God giveth another, and we forget that too: When unbelief doth blasphemously suggest to us, *Such a thing may come once or twice by chance.* God addeth one experience to another, till it even shame us out of our unbelief, as Christ shamed *Thomas*, and we cry out, *My Lord and My God.* Hath it not been thus oft with you? Have not Mercies come so seasonably, so unexpectedly, either by small means, or the means themselves unexpectedly raised up; without your designing or effecting; and plainly in answer to prayers, that they have brought conviction along with them? and you have seen the Name of God engraven on them? Sure it is so with us, when through our sinfull negligence, we are hardly drawn to open our eyes, and see what God is doing. Much more might we have seen if we had but observed the workings of Providence for us. Especially they that are in an afflicted state, and have more sensible daily use for God, and are awakened to seek him, and regard his dealings. I know a Mercy to the body is no certain evidence of Gods Love to the soul. But yet from such experiences a Christian may have

have very ſtrong Probabilities. When we find God hearing Prayers, it is a hopefull ſign that we have ſome intereſt in him. We may ſay, as *Manoahs* wife ſaid to him, *Judg.* 13.23. *If the Lord had meant to deſtroy us, he would not have received a ſacrifice at our hands, nor have done all this for us.* To have God ſo near to us in all that we call upon him for, and ſo ready to relieve us; as if he could not deny an earneſt prayer, and could not endure to ſtop his ears againſt our cries and groans; theſe are hopefull ſignes that he meaneth us good. I know ſpecial Grace is the only Certain Evidence of ſpecial Love: But yet theſe kind of experiences are many times more effectual to refreſh a drooping doubting ſoul, then the ſureſt Evidences. For Evidences may be unſeen, and require a great deal of holy skill and diligence to try them, which few have: But theſe experiences are near us, even in our bodies, and ſhew themſelves: They make all our bones ſay, *Lord who is like unto thee?* And it is a great advantage to have the help of ſenſe it ſelf for our Conſolation. I hope you yet remember the choice particular Providences by which God hath manifeſted to you his Goodneſs, even from your youth till now: eſpecially his frequent anſwering

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ing of your prayers! Methinks these should do something to the dispelling of those black distrustfull thoughts of God. I could wish you would write them down, and oft review them. And when Temptations next come, remember with *David*, who helpt you against the Lion and the Bear, and therefore fear not the uncircumcised Philistine.

2. And you may make great use also of the experiences of others. Is it not a great satisfaction to hear twenty or fourty or a hundred Christians, of the godliest lives, to make the very same complaints as you do your self? The very same complaints have I heard from as many. By this you may see your case is not singular, but the ordinary case of the tendereſt Consciences; and of many that walk uprightly with God. And also, is it not a great help to you, to hear other Christians tell how they have come into those troubles; and how they have got out of them? what hurt them? and what helped them? and how God dealt with them while they lay under them? How desirous are diseased persons to talk with others that have had the same disease? and to hear them tell, how it took them, and how it held them, and specially what cured them. Besides, it will give you much

stronger

ſtronger hopes of cure and recovery to peace of conſcience, when you hear of ſo many that have been cured of the ſame diſeaſe. Moreover, is it not a reviving thing, to hear Chriſtians open the Goodneſs of the Lord? and that in particulars, as upon experience they have found him to their own ſouls? To hear them tell you of ſuch notable diſcoveries of Gods ſpecial providence and care of his people, as may refell all Temptations to Atheiſm and unbelief? To hear them give you their frequent and full experiences of Gods hearing and anſwering their Prayers, and helping them in their diſtreſſes? Though the carnal part of the Mercy were only theirs, yet by improvement, the ſpiritual part may be yours. You may have your faith, and love, and joy confirmed by the experiences of *David*, *Job*, *Paul*, which are paſt ſo long ago; and by the experiences of all your Godly acquaintance, as if they were your own. This is the benefit of the unity of the Church: the bleſſings of one member of the body are bleſſings to the reſt; and if one Rejoyce the reſt may Rejoyce with them, not only for their ſakes, but alſo for their own. Such as God is to the reſt of his children, ſuch he is and will be to you. He is as ready to pity you as them; and to hear your comp'aints

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and moans as theirs. And leſt we ſhould think that none of them were ſo bad as we; he hath left us the examples of his mercies to worſe then ever we were. You never were guilty of witchcraft, and open Idolatry, as *Manaſſes* was, and that for a long time, and drawing the whole Nation, and chief part of the Viſible Church on earth, into Idolatry with him. You never had your hand in the blood of a Saint, and even of the firſt Martyr (*Stephen*) as *Paul* had: You never hunted after the blood of the Saints, and perſecuted them from City to City as he did: And yet God did not only forgive him, but was found of him when he never ſought him, yea when he was perſecuting him in his Members, and kicking againſt the pricks; yea and made him a choſen Veſſel to bear about his Name, and as noble an Inſtrument of the Propagation of his Goſpel, as if he had never been guilty of any ſuch crimes: that he might be an encouraging example to the *unworthieſt ſinners*, and in him might appear the riches of his Mercy, 1 *Tim.* 1. 13, 16. ſee alſo *Titus* 3. 3,4,5,6,7. Is there no ground of comfort in theſe examples of the Saints? The ſame we may ſay of the experiences of Gods people ſtill: And doubtleſs it were well if experimentall Chriſtians did more fully

fully and frequently open to one another their experiences. It were the way to make private particular Mercies, to be more publike and common Mercies; and to give others a part in our bleſſings without any diminution of them to our ſelves. Not that I would have this ſo openly and raſhly done, (by thoſe who through their diſability to expreſs their mindes, do make the works and language of their Spirit ſeem ridiculous to carnal ears) as I perceive ſome in a very formality would have it, (as if it muſt be one of their Church cuſtoms, to ſatisfie the ſociety of the fitneſs of each member before they will receive them:) But I would have Chriſtians that are fit to expreſs their minds, to do it in ſeaſon and with wiſdom: Eſpecially thoſe to whom God hath given any more eminent and notable experiments, which may be of publick uſe. Doubtleſs God hath loſt very much of the honour due to his Name, and poor Chriſtians much of the benefit which they might have received, (and may challenge by the mutual intereſt of fellow-members) for want of the publike communication of the extraordinary and more notable experiences of ſome men. Thoſe that write the lives of the holieſt men when they are dead, can give you but the outſide and carkaſs of their Memorials;

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The most observable passages are usually secret, known only to God and their own souls; which none but themselves are able to communicate. For my own part, I do soberly and seriously profess to you, that the experiences I have had of Gods special Providences, and Fatherly care, and specially of his hearing prayers, have been so strange and great and exceeding numerous, that they have done very much to the quieting of my spirit, and the perswading my soul of Gods Love to me, and the silencing and shaming of my unbelieving heart, and especially for the conquering of all temptations that lead to Atheism or Infidelity, to the denying of special Providence, or of the verity of the Gospel, or of the Necessity of holy Prayer and worshipping of God. Yea those passages that in the bulk of the thing seem to have no great matter in them, yet have come at such seasons, in such a manner, in evident answer to prayers, that they have done much to my confirmation. O happy Afflictions and Distresses! Sufferings and Danger force us to Pray, and force the cold and customary Petitioner to seriousness and importunity. Importunate Prayers bring evident returns: such returns give us sensible experiences: such experiences raise faith, love, and thankfulness; kill unbelief and

and Atheism; and encourage the soul in all distresses, to go the same way as when it sped so well. I often pity the poor seduced Infidels of this age that deny Scripture and Christ himself, and doubt of the usefulness of Prayer and holy Worship; and I wish that they had but the experiences that I have had. O how much more might it do then all their Studies and Disputes! Truly I have once or twice had motions in my mind to have publikely and freely communicated my experiences in a Relation of the more observable passages of my Life: But I found that I was not able to do it to Gods praise as was meet, without a shew of ostentation and vanity, and therefore I forbore.

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DIRECTION XVIII.

18. *Next, that you may yet further understand the true Nature of Assurance, Faith, Doubting and Desperation, I would have you observe this*; *That* God doth not command every man, nor properly any man, ordinarily by his Word, to Believe that his sins are forgiven, and himself is Justified, Adopted, and shall be saved. But he hath prescribed a way by which they may attain to Assurance of these, in which way it is mens Duty to seek it: So that our Assurance is not properly that which is called A Certainty of Belief.

I Have said enough for the proof of this Proposition in the third Part of my Book of Rest, *Chap.* 11. whither I must referre you. But there is more to be said yet

yet for the Application of it. But first I must briefly tell you the meaning of the words. 1. God commandeth us all to believe (wicked and godly) that our sins are made pardonable by the sufficient satisfaction of Christ for them; and that God is very mercifull and ready to forgive: and that he hath conditionally forgiven us all in the New Covenant, making a deed of gift of Christ and pardon and Life in him to all, on condition they Believe in him and Accept what is given. 2. But no man is commanded to Believe that he is Actually forgiven. 3. Therefore I say our Assurance is not strictly to be called Belief, or a Certainty of Belief. For it is only our Certain Belief of those things which we take on the meer credit of the Witnesser or Revealer, which we call, Certainty of Faith. Indeed we commonly in English use the word Belief to express any confident, but uncertain opinion or perswasion: And if any will so take it, then I deny not but our Assurance is a Belief. But it is commonly taken by Divines for an Assent to any thing on the credit of the word of the Revealer; and so is distinguished both from the sensible Apprehension of things, and from Principles that are known by the meer Light and help of Nature; and from the

the Knowledge of Concluſions which by Reaſoning we gather from thoſe Principles. Though yet one and the ſame thing may be Known as Revealed in Nature, and Believed as Revealed Immediatly or Supernaturally. And ſo we both Know and Believe that there is one onely God, who made and preſerveth All things. 4. But our Aſſurance is an Act of Knowledge, participating of Faith and internal ſenſe or Knowledge reflect. For Divine Faith ſaith, *He that Believeth is Juſtified and ſhall be Saved.* Internal ſenſe and knowledge of our ſelves ſaith, *But I Believe.* Reaſon, or Diſcurſive Knowledge ſaith, *Therefore I am Juſtified and ſhall be ſaved.*

Only I muſt adviſe you, that you be not troubled when you meet with that which is contrary to this in any great Divines: For it is only our former Divines whoſe Judgements were partly hurt by hot Diſputations with the Papiſts herein, and partly not come to that maturity as others ſince them have had opportunity to do. And therefore in their expoſitions of the Creed and ſuch like paſſages in the Text, they eagerly inſiſt on it, that when we ſay, We *Believe the Forgiveneſs of ſin, and Life everlaſting*, every man is to profeſs that he Believeth that his own ſinnes are forgiven, and

and he ſhall have Life everlaſting himſelf. But our later Divines, and ſpecially the Engliſh, and moſt eſpecially theſe that deal moſt in Practicals, do ſee the miſtake, and lay down the ſame doctrine which I teach you here, God bids us not Believe as from him, more then he hath revealed. But only one of the Propoſitions is revealed by Gods Teſtimony, *He that Believeth ſhall be Saved.* But it is no where written that *You do Believe*, nor that *You ſhall be Saved*; nor any thing equivalent. And therefore you are not commanded to Believe either of theſe. How the Spirit revealeth theſe, I have fully told you already. In our Creed therefore we do profeſs to Believe Remiſſion of ſinnes to be Purchaſed by Chriſts death, and in his Power to give, and Given in the Goſpel to All on Condition of Believing in Chriſt himſelf for Remiſſion: But not to Believe that our own ſinnes are Actually and Fully Pardoned.

My end in telling you this again (which I have told you elſewhere) is this, That you may not think (as I finde abundance of poor troubled ſouls to do) that Faith (much leſs Juſtifying Faith) is a Believing that you have true Grace, and ſhall be ſaved; And ſo fall a condemning your ſelf

ſelf unjuſtly every time that you doubt of your own Sincerity; and think that ſo much as you doubt of this, ſo much unbelief you have: and ſo many poor ſouls complain that they have no faith, but but little, and that they cannot Believe, becauſe they Believe not their own Faith to be Sincere: and when they wholly judge themſelves unſanctified, then they call that Deſperation, which they think to be a ſinne inconſiſtent with true Grace. Theſe are dangerous Errours, all ariſing from that one Errour which the heat of contention did carry ſome good men to, that Faith is a Belief that our ſinnes are forgiven by Chriſt. Indeed all men are bound to apply Chriſt and the Promiſe to themſelves. But that application conſiſteth in a Belief that this Promiſe is true as belonging to all, and ſo to me, and then in Acceptance of Chriſt and his benefits as an offered gift; and after this in Truſting on him for the full performance of his Promiſe. Hence therefore you may beſt ſee what Unbelief and Deſperation are, and how farre men may charge themſelves with them. When you doubt whether the Promiſe be True, or when you refuſe to Accept

Christ and his Benefits offered in it, and consequently to Trust him as one that is Able and Willing to save you, if you do Assent to his Truth and Accept him; this is Unbelief. But if you do Believe the Truth of the Gospel, and are heartily Willing to Accept Christ as offered in it, and only Doubt whether your Belief and Acceptance of him be sincere, and so whether you shall be saved, this is not Unbelief, but ignorance of your own Sincerity, and its consequents. Nay, and though that Affiance be wanting which is a part of Faith, yet it is but a hindering of the exercise of it, for want of a necessary concomitant condition, for the Grace of Affiance in the Habit and Virtually is there: so that it is not formally Distrust or Unbelief, any more then your not Trusting God in your sleep is Distrust. If a friend do Promise to give you a hundred pound on condition that you thankfully Accept it: If you now do Believe him, and do thankfully Accept it; but yet through some vain scruple shall think *My thankefulnesse is so small that it is not sincere, and therefore I doubt, I do not perform his condition, and so shall never have the gift.* In this

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case now, you do Believe your friend and you do not Distrust him properly; but you Distrust your self, that you perform not the condition; and this hindreth the exercise of that Confidence or Affiance in your friend which is habitually and virtually in you. Just so is it in our present case.

The same may be said of Desperation, which is a Privation of Hope: When we have Believed the Truth of the Gospel, and Accepted Christ offered, we are then bound to Hope that God will give us the Benefits promised: So hope is nothing but *A Desirous expectation* of the good so promised and believed. Now if you begin to Distrust whether God will make good this promise or no, either thinking that it is not True, or he is not able, or hath changed his minde since the making of it, and on these grounds you let go your Hopes, this is Despair. If because that Christ seems to Delay his coming, we should say, I have waited in Hope till now, but now I am out of Hope that ever Christ will come to Judge the world and Glorifie Believers, I will expect it no longer: this is Despair. And it hath its several Degrees more or less, as unbelief hath.

Indeed the Schoolmen ſay that Affiance is nothing but ſtrengthened Hope. Affiance in the propereſt ſenſe is the ſame in ſubſtance with Hope; only it more expreſſeth a Reſpect to the Promiſe and Promiſer, and indeed is Faith and Hope expreſt both together in one word. So that what I ſaid before of Diſtruſt, is true of Deſpair. If you do continue to Believe the Truth of the Goſpel, and particularly of Chriſts coming and glorifying his Saints, and yet you think he will not glorifie you becauſe you think that you are not a true Believer or Saint; This is not Deſperation in the proper ſenſe. For Deſperation is the privation of Hope, where the formal cauſe, the heart and life of it is wanting. But you have here Hope in the Habit, and Virtually do Hope in Chriſt: but the Act of it as to your own particular ſalvation is hindered, upon an accidentall miſtake. In the forementioned example, If your friend Promiſe to give you a hundred pound on condition of your thankfull Acceptance, and promiſeth to come at ſuch an hour and bring it you: If now you ſtay till the hour be almoſt come, and then ſay, *I am out of Hope of his coming now; he*

hath

hath broke his word; this is properly a Deſpair in your friend. But if you only think that you have overſtaid the time, and that it is paſt, and therefore you ſhall not have the gift, this may be called a Deſpair of the event, and a Deſpair of your ſelf; but not properly a Deſpair in your friend; only the Act of Hoping in God is hindered as is ſaid. So it is in our preſent caſe. Men may be ſaid to Deſpair of their Salvation, and to Deſpair in themſelves, but not to Deſpair in God, except the formal cauſe of ſuch Deſpair were there preſent; and except they are drawn to it, by not believing his Truth and Faithfulneſs. The true nature of Deſpair is expreſt in that of the Apoſtles, *Luke* 24.21. *We truſted that this was he that ſhould Redeem Iſrael:* Only it was but imperfect Deſpair: elſe it had been damnable. Their hopes were ſhaken. And for my part, I am perſwaded that it is only this proper Deſpair in God, which is the damnable Deſperation, which is threatned in the Scripture: and not the former: And that if a poor ſoul ſhould go out of this world without any Actual Hope of his own Salvation, meerly becauſe he thinks that he is no true

Believer, that this Soul may be saved, and prove a true Believer for all this. Alas, the great sin that God threatneth is our Distrust of his Faithfulness, and not the doubting of our own sincerity and Distrust of our selves. We have great reason to be very jealous of our own hearts, as knowing them to be Deceitfull above all things and desperately wicked, who can know them? But we have no reason at all to be Jealous of God. Where finde you in Scripture that any is condemned for hard thoughts of themselves, or for not knowing themselves to have true Grace; and for thinking they had none? It is true unbelief in Gods Promise that men are condemned for: even that sinne which is an Aversion of the Soul from God. But perhaps you will ask, Is doubting of our own sincerity and Salvation no sin? I answer, Doubting is either taken in opposition to Believing; or in opposition to knowing or to conjecturing.

1. Doubting as it signifieth only A *not-believing* that our sins are pardoned and we shall be saved, is no sinne (still remember that I take Believing in the str. & proper sense, for *The Crediting of a Divine Testimony or Assertion*) For God

God hath no where commanded us ordinarily to Believe either of these. I say *Ordinarily* (as I did in the Proposition before) because when Christ was on earth he told a man personally *Thy sinnes are forgiven thee* (whether he meant only as to the present disease inflicted for them, or also all punishment, Temporal and Eternal, I will not now discuss) so *Nathan* from God told *David, His sinne was forgiven*: But these were Priviledges only to these persons, and not common to all. God hath no where said, either that All mens sinnes are actually forgiven; or that yours or mine by name are forgiven: But only that All that Believe are forgiven: which supposeth them to Believe before they are forgiven, and that they may be forgiven; and therefore it is not true that they are forgiven before they Believe: and therefore this faith is not a Believing *that they are forgiven*, but a Believing on Christ for forgiveneſſe. Else men must Believe an Untruth to make it become True by their Believing it.

2. But now, *Doubting*, as it is opposed to the *Knowledge* of our Remission and Justification, in those that are Ju-

ſtified is a ſinne: (For it can be no ſinne for an unjuſtified perſon to know that he is unjuſtified.) But then, I pray you mark, how farre it is a ſinne in the Godly, and what manner of ſin it is. 1. It is a ſinne as it is part of our natural ignorance and original Depravedneſs of our Underſtandings, or a fruit hereof and of our ſtrangeneſs to our own hearts, and of their deep Deceitfulneſs, Confuſion, Mutability or Negligence. 2. And further as all theſe are increaſed by long cuſtom in ſinning, and ſo the diſcerning of our ſtates is become more difficult, it is yet a greater ſinne. 3. It is a ſinne as it is the fruit of any particular ſinne by which we have obſcured our own graces, and provoked God to hide his face from us. And ſo all ignorance of any Truth which we ought to know, is a ſinne, ſo the ignorance of our own Regeneration and ſincerity is a ſinne, becauſe we ought to know it. But this is ſo farre from being the great condemning ſinne of unbelief which Chriſt threatneth in his New Law, that it is none of the greateſt or moſt hainous ſort of ſinnes, but the infirmity in ſome meaſure of every Chriſtian.

And

And let me further acquaint you with this difference between these *Doubtings*, and your *Fears and Sorrows* that follow thereupon. Though the Doubting it self be your sin, yet I suppose that the Fears and Sorrows and Cares that follow it may be your Duty. Yet Respectively and by remote participation even these also must be acknowledged sinfull; even as our prayers for that pardon which we have received and knew it not, may by remote participation be called sinfull: because if we had not sinned we should not have been ignorant of our own hearts: and if we had not been ignorant we should not have Doubted of the least true Grace we have: and if we had not so Doubted, we should not have Feared or Sorrowed or Prayed for that Remission in that sense. But yet though these may be called sinfull, as they come from sin, yet more neerly and in themselves considered on supposition of our present estate, they are all Duties, and great Duties necessary to our Salvation. You may say to a Thief that begs for pardon, *If thou hadst not stoln thou hadst not need to have beg'd pardon.* Yet supposing that he hath stoln it may be his Duty to beg pardon. And so you may

say to a poor fearing soul, that fears Damnation and Gods wrath, *Thou needest not fear if thou hadst not sinned.* But when he hath once by sin obscured his evidences, and necessitated Doubting, then is fear and sorrow and praying for Justification and pardon, his Duty: And indeed not fitly to be called sin, but rather a fruit of sin in one respect (and so hath some participation in it) but a fruit of the Spirit and of Christs command in another respect, and so a necessary Duty. For else we should say, that it is a sin to Repent and Believe in Christ, and to love him as Redeemer: For you may say to any sinner, *Thou needest not to have Repented, Believed in a Redeemer,* &c. *but for thy sin*; Yet I hope none will say that so doing is properly a sin, though doing them defectively is. God doth not will and approve of it, that any soul that can see no signes of Grace and sincerity in it self, should yet be as confident, and merry and careless, as if they were certain that all were well. God would not have men doubt of his Love, and yet make light of it: This is a contempt of him. Else what should poor carnall sinners do that finde themselves unsanctified. No nor doth God expect that any man should

should judge of himself better then he hath evidence to warrant such a judgement: But that every man should prove his own work that so he may have rejoycing in himself alone, and not in another. For he that thinketh he is something when he is nothing, deceiveth himself, *Gal.* 6. 3, 4, 5, 6. And no man should be a self-deceiver, especially in a case of such unexpressible consequence. It is therefore a most desperate doctrine of the Antinomians (as most of theirs are) that all men ought to believe Gods special Love to them, and their own Justification: and that they are justified by Believing that they were justified before: and that no man ought to question his faith (saith *Salmarsh*, any more then to question Christ:) and that all fears of our Damnation, or not being Justified after this Believing, are sinne: and those that perswade to them, are Preachers of the Law. (How punctually do the most prophane ungodly people, hold most points of the Antinomian belief, though they never knew that Sect by name!) God commandeth no man to Believe more then is true: nor immediatly to cast away their doubts and fears; but to overcome them in an orderly methodical

dical way: that is, using Gods means till their Graces become more discernable, and their understandings more clear and fit to discern them, that so we may have Assurance of their sincerity, and thereby, of our Justification, Adoption, and right to Glorification. *Heb.* 4.1. *Let us therefore fear least a Promise being left of entring into his Rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.* Psal.2.11. *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce before him with trembling. Kiss the Sonne lest he be angry and ye perish.* Phil.2.12. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.* Not only 1. A reverent fear of Gods Majesty. 2. And a filial fear of offending him. 3. And an awfull fear of his Judgements, when we see them executed on others, and hear them threatned. 4. And a filial fear of temporal chastisements; and lawfull and our duty: but also 5. A fear of damnation exciting to most carefull importunity to escape it; when ever we have so far obscured our evidences, as to see no strong probability of our sincerity in the faith, and so of our salvation. The summe of my speech therefore is this: Do not think that all your fears of Gods wrath are your sins: Much of them is your great duty. Do you not

feel.

feel that God made these fears at your first conversion, the first and a principal means of your Recovery? to drive you to a serious consideration of your state and waies, and to look after Christ with more longing and estimation? and to use the means with more resolution and diligence? Have not these fears been chief preservers of your diligence and integrity ever since? I know love should do more then it doth with us all: But if we had not daily use for both (Love and Fear) God would not 1. Have planted them both in our natures. 2. And have renewed them both by regenerating Grace. 3. And have put into his word the objects to move both (*viz.* Threatnings as well as Promises) That fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom includeth the fear of his threatned wrath. I could say abundance more to prove this, but that I know as to you it is needless for conviction of it: but remember the use of it. Do not put the name of unbelief upon all your fears of Gods displeasure. Much less should you presently conclude that you have no faith, and that you cannot believe, because of these fears. You may have much faith in the midst of these fears; and God may make them preservers of your faith, by

quickning

quickning you up to that means that must maintain it, and by keeping you from those evils that would be as a worm at the root of it, and eat out its precious strength and life. Security is no friend to faith; but a deadlier enemy then fear it self. *Obj.* Then *Cain* and *Judas* sinned not by despairing; or at least not damnably. *Answ.* 1. They despaired not only of themselves, and of the event of their salvation, but also of God; of his Power or Goodness, and Promise, and the sufficiency of any satisfaction of Christ. Their infidelity was the root of their despair. 2. Farre is it from me to say or think that you should despair of the event, or that it is no sin; yea or that you should cherish causeless and excessive jealousies and fears: I shall shew you towards the end, the sinfulness of so doing. Take heed of all fears that drive you from God, or that distract or weaken your spirit, or disable you from duty, or drown your love to God, and delight in him, and destroy your apprehensions of Gods Loveliness and Compassion, and raise black and hard, and unworthy thoughts of God in your minde. Again, I intreat you avoid and abhorre all such fears. But if you find in you the fears of godly jealousie of your own heart, and such moderated

ted fears of the wrath of God, which baniſh ſecurity, preſumption and boldneſs in ſinning, and are (as D. *Sibbs* cals them) the awe-band of your ſoul; and make you fly to the merits and boſom of the Lord Jeſus, as the affrighted child to the lap of the mother, and as the man-ſlayer under the Law to the City of refuge, and as a man purſued by a Lion, to his Sanctuary or hold; do not think you have no faith becauſe you have theſe fears; but moderate them by faith and love, and then thank God for them. Indeed *Perfect love* (which will be in heaven when all is pertected) will caſt out this fear; and ſo it will do ſorrow and care, and prayer and means. But ſee you lay not theſe by till *Perfect love* have caſt them out. See *Jer.* 5. 22, 23. & *Heb.* 12. two laſt verſes. *Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us ſerve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a conſuming fire.*

I am ſenſible that I am too large on theſe foregoing heads; I will purpoſely ſhorten the reſt leſt I weary you.

DIRE-

DIRECTION XIX.

19. *Further understand, that* Those few who do attain to Assurance, have it not either perfectly or constantly *(for the most part)* but mixt with imperfection, and oft clouded and interrupted.

THat the highest Assurance on earth is imperfect, I have shewed you elsewhere. If we be imperfect, and our faith imperfect, and the knowledge of our own hearts imperfect, and all our evidences and graces imperfect; then our Assurance must needs be imperfect also. To dream of Perfection on earth, is to dream of Heaven on earth: And if Assurance may be here perfect, why not all our Graces? Even when all Doubtings are overcome, yet is Assurance farre short of the highest degree.

Besides that measure of Assurance which godly men do partake of, hath here its many sad interruptions, in the most. Upon the

the prevalency of Temptations, and the hidings of Gods face, their ſouls are oft left in a ſtate of ſadneſs, that were but lately as in the arms of Chriſt. How fully might this be proved from the examples of *Job*, *David*, *Jeremy* and others in Scripture? and much more abundantly by the daily complaints and examples of the beſt of Gods people now living among us. As there is no perfect *evenneſs* to be expected in our obedience while we are on earth; ſo neither will there be any conſtant or perfect *evenneſs* in our comforts. He that hath life in one duty, is cold in the next: and therefore he that hath much joy in one duty, hath little in the next. Yea perhaps, duty may but occaſion the renewall of his ſorrows; that the ſoul who before felt not its own burden, at a Sermon, or in Prayer, or holy Meditation, which were wont to revive him, now ſeems to feel his miſeries to be multiplied. The time was once with *David*, when the thoughts of God were ſweet to him, and he could ſay, *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my ſoul*: And yet he ſaw the time alſo, When he remembred God and was troubled, he complained and his Spirit was overwhelmed: God ſo held his eyes waking, that he was troubled and

could

could not speak: he considered the daies of old, and the years of ancient time; he called to remembrance his song in the night, he communed with his own heart, and his spirit made diligent search: *Will the Lord*, saith he, *cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gratious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercy?* Was not this a low ebb and a sad case that *David* was in? Till at last he saw, This was his infirmity, *Psal.* 77. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Had *David* no former experiences to remind? no arguments of comfort to consider of? Yes, but there is at such a season an incapacity to improve them: There is not only a want of comfort, but a kind of averseness from it: The soul bendeth it self to break its own Peace, and to put away comfort farre from it. So saith he in *vers.* 2. *My soul refused to be comforted.* In such cases, men are witty to argue themselves into distress; that it is hard for one that would comfort them to answer them; and they are witty in refelling all the Arguments of comfort that you can offer them; so that it is hard to fasten any thing on them. They have a weak-wilfulness against their own Consolations.

Seeing

Seeing then that the best have such storms and sad interruptions, do not you wonder or think your case strange if it be so with you. Would you speed better then the best? Long for Heaven then, where only is Joy without sorrow, and everlasting *Rest* without interruption.

DIRECTION XX.

20. *Let me also give you this warning,* That You must never expect so much Assurance on earth, as shall set you above a Possibility of the loss of Heaven, or above all apprehensions of real danger of your miscarrying.

I Conceive this advertisement to be of great necessity. But I must first tell you the meaning and then the reasons of it. Only I am sorry that I know not how to express it fully, but in School terms which are not so familiar to you. 1. That which shall certainly come to pass, we call a thing [*Future.*] That which May and

Can

Can be Done, we call [*Possible.*] *All* things are not Future which are Possible: God *can* do more then he *hath* done or *will* do. He could have made more worlds, and so more were Possible then were Future. Moreover a thing is said to be Possible, in reference to some Power which can accomplish it: whether it be Gods Power, or Angels, or mans. God hath Decreed that none of his Elect shall finally or totally fall away and perish: and therefore their so falling and perishing is not-future, that is, It is a thing that shall never come to pass: But God never Decreed that it should be utterly *Impossible,* and therefore it still remaineth Possible, though it shall never come to pass. *Obj.* But it is said, *They shall deceive if it were Possible the very Elect.* A most comfortable place, which many opposers of Election and Free-grace, do in vain seek to obscure. But let me tell you for the right understanding of it, 1. That as I said, [*Possible*] and [*Impossible*] are Relative terms, and have Relation to the Power of some Agent, as proportioned to the thing to be Done: Now this Text speaks only of the power of false Christs and false Prophets (and the devil by them) Their power of Deceiving is exceeding great,

great, but not great enough to Deceive the Elect: which is true in two Respects, 1. Because the Elect are guided and fortified by Gods Spirit. 2. Because seducers work not efficiently, but finally, by propounding objects; or by a Morall improper efficiency only. All their seducements cannot force or necessitate us to be Deceived by them. But though it be impossible to them to do it; yet it is Possible to God to permit (which yet he never will) and so Possible for our selves to be our own Deceivers, or to give Deceivers strength against us, by a wilfull receiving of their poysoned baits. 2. Besides Christ spoke not in *Aristotles* School, but among the Vulgar, where words must be used in the common sense, or else they will not be understood: And the Vulgar use to call that *Impossible* which shall never come to pass.

And indeed when we say that it is Possible, or Impossible for a man to sin or fall away, there is some degree of Impropriety in the Terms; because *Possible* and *Impossible* are terms properly relating to some power apportioned to a work: but sinning and falling away thereby, are the consequents of impotency, and not the effects of Power: except we speak of the natural

natural act, wherein the ſin abideth. But this muſt be born with, for want of a fitter word to expreſs our meaning by. But I'le leave theſe things which are not fit for you, and deſire you to leave them and overpaſs them, if you underſtand them not.

2. I here told you alſo, that you muſt not look to be above all apprehenſion of danger of your miſcarrying. The grounds of this are theſe: 1. Becauſe, as is ſaid, our miſcarrying remaineth ſtill Poſſible. 2. Becauſe the perfect certain knowledge of our Election, and that we ſhall not fall away, is proper to God only: We have our ſelves but a Defective, interrupted Aſſurance of it. 3. The Covenant gives us ſalvation but on condition of our perſeverance, and perſeverance on condition that we quench not the Spirit: which we ſhall do, if we loſe the apprehenſion of our danger. 4. Accordingly there is a connexion in our Aſſurance, between all the ſeveral cauſes of our Salvation, and neceſſaries thereto; whereof the apprehenſion of danger is one. We are ſure we ſhall be ſaved, if we be ſure to Perſevere: elſe not. We are ſure to Perſevere, if we be ſure faithfully to reſiſt Temptations. We can be no ſurer of faith-

faithfull resisting of Temptations, then we are sure to be kept in an apprehension of our danger.

I still say therefore that the Doctrine of Antinomians is the most ready way to Apostacy and perdition: and no wonder if it lead to the Licentiousness and Scandals which our eyes have seen to be its genuine fruits! They cry down the weakness, unbelief and folly of poor Christians, that will apprehend themselves in danger of falling away, and so live in fear, after they are once Justified; and that if they fall into sin (as whoredom, drunkenness, murder, Perjury, destroying the Ministry, and expelling the Gospel, *&c.*) will presently question or fear their estates and their Justification. Such like passages I lately read in some printed Sermons of one of my ancient acquaintance, who would never have come to that pass that he is at now, if his Judgement and Humility had been as great as his Zeal. I intreat you therefore never to expect such an Assurance as shall extinguish all your apprehensions of danger. He that sees not the danger, is neerest it and likely to fall into it. Only he that seeth and apprehendeth it, is likely to avoid it. He that seeth no danger of falling away, is in greatest

greatest danger of it. I doubt not but thats the cause of the Seditions, Scandals, Heresies, Bloodguiltiness, Destroying of the Churches of Christ, and most Horrid Apostacies, Hypocrisie and wickedness, which these late times have been guilty of; that they apprehended not the danger of ever coming into such a state, or ever doing such things, but would have said, *Am I a Dog?* to him that should have foretold them what is come to pass. Wonderfull! that men should be so blinded by false doctrine, as not to know, that the apprehension of danger is made in the very fabrication of the nature of man, to be the very engine to move his soul in all waies of self-preservation and salvation! Yea it is that very supposed principle, upon which all the Government of the world, and the Laws and order of every Nation, are grounded. We could not keep the very Bruits from tearing us in pieces, but for their own safety: because they apprehend themselves to be in danger by it! The fear of man is it that restraineth them. But for this, no mans life would be in any safety: For every malicious man would be a murderer: He that feareth not the loss of his own life, is master of another mans. Do these men think that the apprehension

prehenſion of bodily dangers may carry them on through all undertakings, and be the potent ſpring of moſt of their actions, and warrant all thoſe courſes that elſe would be unwarrantable, ſo that they dare plead *Neceſſity* to warrant thoſe fearfull things which by extenuating language (like *Sauls*) are called *Irregularities!* And yet that it is unlawfull or unmeet for a Chriſtian, yea the weakeſt Chriſtian, to live in any apprehenſions of danger to their ſouls? either danger of ſinning, or falling away, or periſhing for ever? No wonder if ſuch do ſin, and fall away and periſh. Would theſe men have fought well by Sea or Land, if they had apprehended no danger? Would the earth have been ſo covered with carkaſſes and with blood (yea even of Saints) and the world filled with the dolefull calamities that accompanied and have followed, if there had been no apprehenſions of danger? Would they take Phyſick when they are ſick? Would they avoid fire, or water, or thieves; but through an apprehenſion of danger? Let them talk what they pleaſe, if ever they eſcape hell, without a deep apprehenſion of the danger of it, it muſt be in a way not known by Scripture or by Nature. Sure I am *Paul* did tame his body

and bring it in ſubjection, through an apprehenſion of this danger, leſt when he had Preached to others, himſelf ſhould be a caſt-away or reprobate, 2 *Cor.* 9. 27. And Chriſt himſelf, when he biddeth us, *Fear not them that can kill the body* (whom yet theſe men think it lawfull to fear and fight againſt) yet chargeth us, with a double charge, ſo *Fear him that is able to deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell: yea I ſay unto you*, ſaith Chriſt, *fear him*, Luk. 12. 5. What can be plainer? and that to his Diſciples? My deteſtation of theſe deſtructive Antinomian Principles, makes me to run out further againſt them then I intended: Though it were eaſie more abundantly to manifeſt their hatefulneſs: But my reaſons are theſe: 1. Becauſe theſe Mountebanks are ſtill thruſting in themſelves and impudently proclaiming their own skill, and the excellency of their remedies for the cure of wounded conſciences, and the ſetling of peace: when indeed their receipts are rank poiſon, guilded with the pretious name of Chriſt and free-Grace. 2. Becauſe I would not have your doubtings cured by the Devil; for he will but cure one diſeaſe with another, and a leſſer with a far greater. If he can ſo cure your fears and doubtings as to bring you into carnal

carnal ſecurity and preſumption, he will loſe nothing by the cure, and you will get nothing. If he can turn a poor doubting troubled Chriſtian, to be a ſecure Antinomian, he hath cured the ſmart of a cut finger by caſting them into a Lethargy, or ſtupefaction by his opium. To go to Antinomian receipts to cure a troubled ſoul, is as going to a Witch to cure the body. 3. I would have you ſenſible of Gods goodneſs to you in theſe very troubles that you have ſo long lain under. Your bleſſed Phyſician knew your diſeaſe, and the temperature of your ſoul. Perhaps he ſaw that you were in ſome danger of being carried away with the Honours, Profits or Pleaſures of this world; and would have been entangled in either covetouſneſs, pride, voluptuouſneſs or ſome ſuch deſperate ſinne: And now by theſe conſtant and extraordinary apprehenſions of your danger, theſe ſinnes have been much kept under, temptations weakned, and your danger prevented. If you have found no ſuch inclinations in your ſelf, yet God might find them. Had it not been farre worſe for you to have lain ſo many years in pride, ſenſuality and forgetfulneſs of God, and utter neglect of the ſtate of your ſoul, then to have lain ſo long as

you have done in apprehenſions of your danger? O love and admire your wiſe Phyſician! Little do you know now what he hath been doing for you: Nor ſhall you ever fully know it in this life: but hereafter you ſhall know it, when your ſanctification, and conſolation, and his praiſes ſhall be perfected together. 4. If you ſhould for the time to come expect or deſire that God ſhould ſet you out of all apprehenſion of danger, you know not what it is that you deſire: It were to deſire your own undoing. Only ſee that you apprehend not your danger to be greater then it is; nor ſo apprehend it as to increaſe it, by driving you from Chriſt, but as to prevent it by driving you to him. Entertain not fancies and dreams of danger in ſtead of right apprehenſions. Apprehend your happineſs and grounds of hope and comfort, and ſafety in Chriſt, and let theſe quite exceed your apprehenſions of the danger. Look not on it as a remedileſs danger, or as greater then the remedy. Do not conclude that you ſhall periſh in it, and it will ſwallow you up: But only let it make you hold faſt on Chriſt, and keep cloſe to him in obedience. Shall I lay open all the matter expreſſed in this ſection, by a familiar compariſon?

A King having many Subjects and Sons, which are all beyond Sea, or beyond some River, they must needs be brought over to him before they can live or reign with him. The River is frozen over at the sides till it come almost to the middle. The foolish children are all playing on the Ice; where a deceiving enemy enticeth them to play on till they come to the deep, where they drop in one by one and perish. The eldest Son, who is with the Father on the other side, undertaketh to cast himself into the water, and swim to the further side, and break the Ice, and swim back with them all that will come with him and hold by him. The Father bids him, Bring all my Subjects with you, if they will come and hold by you; but be sure you fail not to bring my Sons. This is resolved on: The Prince casteth himself in the water, and swimmeth to the further side: He maketh a way through the Ice, and offereth all of them his safe carriage, if they will Accept him to be their bearer and helper, and will trust themselves on him, and hold fast by him till they come to the further side. Some refuse his help and think he would deceive them, and lead them into the deep and there leave them to perish: Some had rather play on the Ice and will

not hearken to him: Some dare not venture through the ſtreams, or will not endure the coldneſs of the water: Some waveringly agree to him, and hold faintly by his skirt, and when they feel the cold water, or are near the deep, or are weary of holding, they loſe him; either turning back; or periſhing ſuddenly in the gulf. The children are of the ſame minde with the reſt, but he is reſolved to loſe none of them, and therefore he chargeth them to come with him, and tels them fully what a welcome they ſhall have with their Father; and ceaſeth not his importunity till he perſwade them to conſent: Some of them ſay, How ſhall we ever get over the River? we ſhall be drowned by the way: He tels them, I will carry you ſafe over; ſo you will but hold faſt by me: Never fear; I warrant you: They all lay hold on him and venture in with him. When they are in the midſt ſome are afraid, and cry out, We ſhall be drowned: Theſe he encourageth, and bids them truſt him; hold faſt; and fear not. Others when they hear theſe words that they need not fear, they grow ſo bold and utterly ſecure as to loſe their hold: To theſe he ſpeaketh in other language, and chargeth them to hold faſt by him, for if they loſe their

their hold they will fall into the bottom, and if they ſtick not to him they will be drowned. Some of them upon this warning hold faſt: others are ſo boldly confident of his skill and good-will and promiſe that they forget or value not his warning and threatning, but loſe their hold: Some through lazineſs and wearineſs do the like. Whereupon he lets them ſink till they are almoſt drowned and cry out for help, *Save us or we periſh*, and think they are all loſt: and then he laieth hold of them and fetcheth them up again, and chideth them for their bold folly, and biddeth them look better to themſelves and hold faſter by him hereafter if they love themſelves. Some at laſt through meer wearineſs and weakneſs, before they can reach the bank, cry out, *O I am tired, I faint, I ſhall never hold faſt till I reach the ſhore, I ſhall be drowned.* Theſe he comforteth and gives them cordials and holdeth them by the hand, and bids them, Deſpair not: do your beſt: Hold faſt, and I will help you. And ſo he brings them all ſafe to the Haven.

This King is God: Heaven is his habitation: The Subjects are all men: The Sons who are part of the Subjects are the Elect: The reſt are the *Non-Elect*: The

River or Sea is the paſſage of this life. The further ſide, is all mens natural, ſinfull diſtance and ſeparation from God and happineſs: The Ice that bears them, is this frail life of Pleaſures, Profits and Honours which delight the fleſh: The depth unfrozen is hell. He that ticeth them thither is the devil: The eldeſt Son that is ſent to bring them over, is Jeſus Chriſt. His Commiſſion and undertaking is, to help all over that refuſe not his Help; and to ſee that the Elect be infallibly Recovered and Saved. Do I need to go over the other particulars? I know you ſee my meaning in them all: Specially that which I aim at is this: that as *Paul* had a promiſe of the life of all that were with him in the ſhip, and yet when ſome would have gone out, he told them *Except theſe abide in the ſhip ye cannot be ſaved*, Act. 27. 31. (ſo that he makes their apprehenſion of danger in a Poſſibility of being drowned to be the means of detaining them in the ſhip till they came all ſafe to land) ſo Jeſus Chriſt who will infallibly ſave all his Elect (they being given him by his father to be infallibly ſaved) will do it by cauſing them to hold faſt by him, through all the troubles and labours and temptations of this tumultuous tempeſtuous

peſtuous world, and that till they came to land; and the apprehenſion of their danger ſhall be his means to make them hold faſt: Yet is not their ſafety principally in themſelves, but in him: Nor is it their holding faſt by him that is the chief cauſe of their difference from thoſe that periſh: but that is his love and reſolution to ſave them. And therefore when they do let go their hold, he will not ſo loſe them; but will fetch them up again: Only he will not bring them through this ſea of danger, as you would draw a block through the water: but as men that muſt hold faſt, and be commanded and threatned to that end: and therefore when they loſe their hold, it is the fear of drowning, which they felt themſelves near, which ſhall cauſe them to hold faſter the next time: and this muſt needs be the fear of a poſſible danger. And for thoſe that periſh they have none to blame but themſelves. They periſh not for want of a Saviour: but becauſe they would not lay hold on him, and follow him through the tempeſts and waves of trial: Nor can they quarrel with him, becauſe he did more for others, and did not as much for them, as long as he offered them ſo ſufficient help, that only their own wilfull refuſal

was their ruine, and their perdition was of themſelves.

I conclude therefore, That ſeeing our Salvation is laid by God, upon our faithfull obedient holding faſt to Chriſt through all trials and difficulties, and our holy fear is the means of that holding faſt (Chriſt being ſtill the principal cauſe of our ſafety) therefore never look for ſuch a Certainty of Salvation as ſhall put you above ſuch fears and moderated apprehenſions of danger: For then its ten to one you will loſe your hold. You read in Scripture very many warnings to take heed leaſt we fall, and threatnings to thoſe that do fall away and draw back. What are all theſe for, but to excite in us thoſe moderate fears and cares and holy diligence which may prevent our falling away. And remember this, that there can be no ſuch holy fears and cares and diligence, where there is no danger or poſſibility of falling away; for there can be no Act without its proper Object: And the Object of fear is A poſſible hurt, at leaſt in the apprehenſion of him that feareth it. No man can fear that evil which he knoweth to be Impoſſible.

DIRECTION XXI.

21. *The next advice which I must give you is this*, Be thankfull if you can but reach to a setled Peace and composure of your minde, and lay not too much on the high raptures and feelings of comfort which some do possess: And if ever you enjoy such feeling Joyes, expect not that they should be either long or often.

IT is the cause of miserable languishing to many a poor soul to have such importunate expectations of such passionate Joyes, that they think without these they have no true comfort at all; no witness of the Spirit, no Spirit of Adoption, no joy in the holy Ghost. Some think that others have much of this though they have not, and therefore they torment themselves because it is not with them as with others: when alas, they little know how it goes with others! Some taste of such raptures

raptures ſometimes themſelves; and therefore when they are gone, they think they are forſaken, and that all grace, or peace at leaſt is gone with them. Take heed of theſe expectations. And to ſatisfie you let me tell you theſe two or three things: 1. A ſetled calm and peace of ſoul is a great Mercy, and not to be undervalued and looked at as Nothing. 2. The higheſt raptures and paſſionate feeling joyes, are uſually of moſt doubtfull ſincerity. Not that I would have any ſuſpect the ſincerity of them without cauſe: but ſuch paſſions are not ſo certain ſignes of Grace, as the ſetled frame of the underſtanding and will: nor can we ſo eaſily know that they are of the Spirit: and they are liable to more queſtioning, and have in them a greater Poſſibility of deceit. Doubtleſs it is very much that Phantaſie and Melancholy, and ſpecially a natural weakneſs and moveable temper will do in ſuch caſes. Mark whether it be not moſtly theſe three ſorts of people that have or pretend to have ſuch extraordinary raptures and feelings of joy. 1. Women and others that are moſt paſſionate. 2. Melancholy People. 3. Men that by erroneous opinions have loſt almoſt all their underſtandings in their phantaſies, and live like men in a continual dream.

dream. Yet I doubt not but ſolid men have oft high joyes; and more we might all have if we did our duty: And I would have no Chriſtian content himſelf with a dull quietneſs of ſpirit, but by all means poſſible to be much in labouring to rejoyce in God, and raiſing their ſouls to heavenly delights: O what lives do we loſe, which we might enjoy! But my meaning is this: Look at theſe joyes and delights as Duties and as Mercies, but look not at them as Marks of trial; ſo as to place more neceſſity in them then God hath done, or to think them to be ordinary things. If you do but feel ſuch an high eſtimation of Chriſt and Heaven, that you would not leave him for all the world, take this for your ſureſt Signe. And if you have but ſo much Probability or Hope of your intereſt in him, that you can think of God as one that loveth you, and can be thankfull to Chriſt for Redeeming you, and are gladder in theſe hopes of your intereſt in Chriſt and Glory then if you were owner of all the world; take this for a happy Mercy and a high Conſolation. Yet I mean not that your joy in Chriſt will be alwaies ſo ſenſible, as for worldly things; but it will be more rational, ſolid, and deeper at the Heart. And that you

may

may know by this, You would not for all the Pleaſures, Honours or Profits in the world be in the ſame caſe as once you were (ſuppoſing that you were converted ſince you had the uſe of Reaſon and Memory) or at leaſt as you ſee the ungodly world ſtill lye in.

3. And let me adde this: Commonly thoſe that have the higheſt paſſionate joyes have the ſaddeſt lives: for they have with all the moſt paſſionate fears and ſorrows. Mark it whether you finde not this prove true. And it is partly from Gods will in his diſpenſations: partly from their own neceſſities, who after their exaltations do uſually need a prick in the fleſh, and a meſſenger of Satan to buffet them, leſt they be exalted above meaſure: and partly and moſt commonly it is from the temperature of their bodies. Weak paſſionate women of moveable ſpirits and ſtrong affections, when they Love they Love violently, and when they Rejoyce, eſpecially in ſuch caſes, they have moſt ſenſible Joyes, and when any fears ariſe, they have moſt terrible ſorrows. I know it is not ſo with all of that ſex; but mark the ſame people uſually that have the higheſt Joyes, and ſee whether at other times they have not the greateſt troubles. This

week

week they are as at the gates of Heaven, and the next as at the doors of hell. I am ſure with many it is ſo. Yet it need not be ſo if Chriſtians would but look at theſe high joyes as Duties to be endeavoured and Mercies to be valued: But when they will needs Judge of their ſtate by them, and think that God is gone from them, or forſaken them, when they have not ſuch joyes, then it leaves them in terror and amazement. Like men after a flaſh of lightning that are left more ſenſible of the darkneſs. For no wiſe man can expect that ſuch Joyes ſhould be a Chriſtians ordinary ſtate; or God ſhould ſo diet us with a continual feaſt. It would neither ſuit with our health, nor the condition of this Pilgrimage. Live therefore on your Peace of conſcience as your ordinary diet: when this is wanting, know that God appointeth you a faſt for your health: and when you have a feaſt of high Joyes, feed on it and be thankfull: but when they are taken from you, gape not after them as the Diſciples did after Chriſt at his Aſcenſion; but return thankfully to your ordinary diet of Peace: and remember that theſe Joyes which are now taken from you, may ſo return again: however there is a place prepa-

ring

ring for you, where your Joyes ſhall be full.

DIRECTION XXII.

22. *My next Direction is this,* Spend more of your time and care about your Duty then about your Comforts: and for the exerciſe and increaſe of your Graces then for the diſcovery of them: And when you have done all that you can, for Aſſurance and Comfort, you ſhall finde that it will very much depend on your Actual Obedience.

THis Direction is of as great importance as any that I have yet given you: but I ſhall ſay but little of it becauſe I have ſpoke of it ſo fully already in my Book of *Reſt*, Part 3. Ch. 8, 9, 10, 11. My Reaſons for what I here aſſert are theſe: 1. Duty goeth in order of nature and time before comfort: as the Precept is before the Promiſe: Comfort is part of the Reward,

Reward, and therefore neceſſarily ſuppoſeth Duty. 2. Grace makes men both ſo ingenuous and Divine, as to conſider Gods due as well as their own; and what they ſhould Do, as well as what they ſhall Have: ſtill remembring that our works cannot Merit at Gods hands. 3. As we muſt have Grace before we can Know we have it, ſo ordinarily we muſt have a good meaſure of Grace before we can ſo clearly diſcern it as to be certain of it. Small things, I have told you are next to none, and hardly diſcernable by weak eyes. When all waies in the world are tried, it will be found, that there is no way ſo ſure for a doubting ſoul to be made certain of the truth of his Graces, as to keep them in Action, and get them increaſed. And it will be found that there is no one cauſe of Chriſtians doubting of the truth of their Faith, Love, Hope, Repentance, Humility, *&c.* ſo great or ſo common as the ſmall degree of theſe Graces. Doth not the very language of complaining Chriſtians ſhew this? One ſaith, I have no faith: I cannot believe: I have no love to God: I have no delight in Duty: Another ſaith, I cannot mourn for ſin: my heart was never broken: I cannot patiently bear an injury: I have no courage

rage in oppoſing ſin, *&c.* If all theſe were not in a low and weak degree, men could not ſo ordinarily think they had none. A lively, ſtrong, working Faith, Love, Zeal, Courage, *&c.* would ſhew themſelves, as do the higheſt Towers, the greateſt mountains, the ſtrongeſt windes, the greateſt flames, which will force an obſervance by their greatneſs and effects. 4. Conſider alſo that it is more pleaſing to God to ſee his people ſtudy him and his will directly, then to ſpend the firſt and chiefeſt of their ſtudies about the attaining of comforts to themſelves. 5. And it is the nature of Grace to tend firſt and chiefly toward God: and but ſecondarily to be the evidence of our own happineſs. We have faith given us principally that we might believe, and live by it in daily applications of Chriſt: We have repentance that it might break us off from ſin and bring us back to God: We have Love that we might Love God and our Redeemer, his Saints and Laws and waies: We have Zeal that we might be quickened in all our holy duties: and we have obedience to keep us in the way of our duty: The firſt thing we have to do with theſe Graces is to uſe them for thoſe holy ends which their nature doth expreſs.

expreſs. And then the diſcerning of them that we may have Aſſurance followeth after this both in time and dignity. 6. And it is a matter of farre greater concernment to our ſelves to ſeek after the obtaining of Chriſt and Grace, then after the certain knowledge that we have them. You may be ſaved though you never get Aſſurance here, but you cannot be ſaved without Chriſt and Grace. God hath not made Aſſurance the Condition of your ſalvation. It tends indeed exceedingly to your comfort, and a pretious mercy it is; but your ſafety lieth not on it. It is better go ſorrowfull and doubting to Heaven, then comfortably to hell. Firſt therefore ask what is the Condition of ſalvation and the way to it, and then look that you do your beſt to perform it, and to go that way; and then try your performance in its ſeaſon. 7. Beſides, as it is a work of farre greater moment, ſo alſo of quicker diſpatch, to Believe and Love Chriſt truly, then to get Aſſurance that you do truly Believe and Love him. You may believe immediatly (by the help of Gods Grace:) but getting Aſſurance of it, may be the work of a great part of your life. Let me therefore intreat this one thing of you, that when

you

you feel the want of any Grace, you would not presently bend all your thoughts upon the enquiry Whether it be true or no; but rather say to your self *I see trying is a great and difficult, a long and tedious Work: I may be this many years about it, and possibly be unresolved still. If I should conclude that I have no Grace, I may be mistaken: and so I may, if I think that I have it. I may inquire of friends and Ministers long, and yet be left in doubt; It is therefore my surest Way to seek presently to obtain it, if I have it not, and to increase it if I have it: and I am certain none of that labour Will be lost: to get more is the Way to know I have it.*

But perhaps you will say, How should I get more Grace? that's a business of greater difficulty then so. I answer, Understand what I told you before, that as the beginning of Grace is in your Understanding, so the heart and life of it is in your Will: and the Affections and passionate part are but the fruits and branches. If therefore your Grace be weak, it is chiefly in an *unwillingness* to yield to Christ and his Word and Spirit. Now how should an unwilling soul be made *willing?* Why thus, 1. Pray constantly as you are able, for a willing minde, and yielding

yielding inclinable heart to Christ. 2. Hear constantly those Preachers that bend their doctrine to inform your understanding of the great necessity and excellency of Christ and Grace and Glory; and to perswade the Will with the most forcible Arguments. A perswading quickning Ministry that helps to excite your Graces and draw up your heart to Christ, is more usefull then they that spend most of their time to perswade you of your sincerity, and give you comfort. 3. But specially lay out your thoughts more in the most serious Considerations of those things which tend to breed and feed those particular Graces which you would have increased. Objects and moving Reasons kept much upon the minde by serious thoughts, are the great engine appointed both by nature and by Grace to turn about the soul of man. Thoughts are to your soul, as taking in the Air, and Meat and Drink to your body. Objects considered do turn the soul into their own Nature. Such as are the things that you most think and consider of (I mean in pursuance of them) such will you be your self. Consideration, frequent serious Consideration is Gods great instrument to convert the soul and to confirm

confirm it: to get grace and to keep it and increaſe it: If any ſoul periſh for want of Grace, it's ten to one it is mainly for want of frequent and ſerious Conſideration. That the moſt of us do languiſh under ſuch weakneſſes, and attain to ſmall degrees of Grace, is for want of ſober, frequent conſideration. We know not how great things this would do, if it were but faithfully managed. This then is my advice, When you feel ſo great a want of faith and love (for thoſe be the main Graces for trial and uſe) that you doubt whether you have any or none, lay by thoſe doubting thoughts a while, and preſently go and ſet your ſelf to conſider of God's Truth, Goodneſs, Amiableneſs, and Kindheartedneſs to miſerable unworthy ſinners: think what he is in himſelf, and what he is to you, and what he hath done for you, and what he will do for you if you do but conſent. And then think of the vanity of all the childiſh Pleaſures of this world, how ſoon, and in how ſad a caſe they will leave us; and what ſilly contemptible things they are in compariſon of the everlaſting Glory of the Saints! By that time you have warmed your ſoul a little with ſuch ſe-

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rious thoughts, you will finde your Faith and Love revive, and begin to ſtir and work within you: And then you will feel that you have Faith and Love! Only remember what I told you before, that the heart and ſoul of ſaving Faith and Love (ſuppoſing a Belief that the Goſpel is true) is all in this one Act of *Willingneſs* or *Conſent* to have Chriſt as he is offered. Therefore if you doubt of your Faith and Love, it is your own Willingneſs that you doubt of; or elſe you know not what you do. Now methinks, if you took but a ſober view of the goodneſs of God and the Glory of Heaven on one ſide, and of the ſilly, empty, worthleſs world on the other ſide; and then ask your heart, Which it will chuſe? and ſay to your ſelf, *O my ſoul, the God of Glory offers thee thy choice, of dung and vanity for a little time, or of the unconceivable Joyes of Heaven for ever: Which wilt thou chooſe?* I ſay, methinks the anſwer of your own ſoul ſhould preſently reſolve you that you do Believe, and that you Love God above this preſent world! For if you can chooſe him before the world, then you are more willing of him then the world: and if he have more of your will, for certain he hath

hath more of your Faith and Love. Uſe therefore, in ſtead of doubting of your Faith, to Believe till you put it out of doubt: And if yet you doubt, ſtudy God and Chriſt and Glory yet better, and keep thoſe objects by Conſideration cloſe to your heart, whoſe nature is to work the heart to Faith and Love. For certainly objects have a mighty power on the ſoul: and certainly God and Chriſt and Grace and Glory are Mighty Objects; as able to make a full and deep impreſſion on mans ſoul as any in the world: and if they work not, it is not through any imperfection in them, but becauſe they be not well applied, and by Conſideration held upon the heart that they may work. Perhaps you will ſay, that Meditation is too hard a work for you; and that your memory is ſo weak that you want matter to meditate upon; or if you do meditate on theſe, yet you feel no great motion or alteration on your heart. To this I anſwer: If you want matter, take the help of ſome book that will afford you matter; and if you want life in Meditation, peruſe the moſt quickning writings you can get. If you have not better at hand, read over (and ſeriouſly conſider as you read

read it) those passages in the end of my Book of *Rest*, which direct you in the exercise of these graces, and give you some matter for your Meditation to work upon. And remember that if you can increase the resolved choice of your will, you increase your Love, though you feel not those Affectionate workings that you desire.

Let me ask you now whether you have indeed taken this course in your doubtings? If not, how unwisely have you done? Doubting is no cure: but actual Believing and Loving is a cure. If Faith and Love were things that you would fain get, but cannot, then you had cause enough to fear, and to lie down and rise in trouble of minde from one year to another. But its no such matter: It is so far from being beyond your reach or power to have these Graces though you would, that they themselves are nothing else but your very Willingness; at least your Willingness to have Christ is both your Faith and Love. It may be said therefore to be in the power of your Will, which is nothing else but that Actual Willingness which you have already. If therefore you are unwilling to have him, what makes you complain for want of the

ſenſe of his preſence, and the Aſſurance of his Love, and the Graces of his Spirit, as you frequently do? It's ſtrange to me, that people ſhould make ſo many complaints to God and men, and ſpend ſo many ſad hours in fears and trouble, and all for want of that which they would not have: If you be not Willing be Willing now: If you ſay you cannot; do as I have before directed you: One hours ſober, ſerious thoughts of God and the world, of Chriſt and Satan, of ſin and Holineſs, of Heaven and hell, and the differences of them, will do very much to make you Willing. Yet miſtake me not: Though I ſay you may have Chriſt if you Will, and Faith and Love if you Will, and no man can truly ſay, I would be glad to have Chriſt (as he is offered) but Cannot; Yet this Gladneſs, Conſent or Willingneſs which I mention, is the effect of the ſpecial work of the Spirit, and was not in your power before you had it: nor is it yet ſo in your power as to Believe without Gods further help: but he that hath made you willing, will not be wanting to maintain your willingneſs. Though I will ſay to any man, You may have Chriſt if you Will: yet I will ſay to no man, You can be willing of your ſelf,

ſelf, or without the ſpecial Grace of God.

Nay let me further ask: Have not you darkned, buried or weakned your Graces, in ſtead of exerciſing and increaſing them, even then when you complained for want of Aſſurance of them? when you found a want of Faith and Love, have not you weakened them more, and ſo made them leſs diſcernable? Have you not fed your unbelief, and diſputed for your doubtings, and taken Satans part againſt your ſelf; and (which is farre worſe) have you never through theſe doubtings entertained hard thoughts of God, and preſented him to your ſoul as unwilling to ſhew you mercy, and in an unlovely, dreadfull, hideous ſhape, fitter to affright you from him then to draw you to him, and likelier to provoke your hatred then your love? If you have not done thus, I know too many troubled ſouls that have: And if you have, you have taken a very unlikely way to get Aſſurance. If you would have been certain that you Loved God in ſincerity, you ſhould have laboured to Love him more, till you had been certain: And that you might do ſo, you ſhould have kept better thoughts of God in your minde. You will hardly love him while you think of him as evil, or at leaſt

as hurtfull to you. Never forget this Rule which I laid you down in the beginning, that *He that will ever love God, muſt apprehend him to be Good: and the more large and deep are our apprehenſions of his goodneſs, the more will be our Love: For ſuch as God appears to be to mens fixed conceivings, ſuch will their Affections be to him. For the fixed, deep conceptions or apprehenſions of the mind, do lead about the ſoul, and guide the life.*

I conclude therefore with this important and importunate requeſt to you, That *though it be a duty neceſſary in its time and place, to examine our ſelves concerning our ſincerity, in our ſeveral graces and duties to God; yet be ſure that the firſt and farre greater part of your time, and pains and care and inquiries, be for the getting and increaſing of your grace, then for the diſcerning it; and to perform your duty rightly, then to diſcern your right performance.* And when you conferre with Miniſters or others that may teach you, ſee that you ask ten times at leaſt, *How ſhould I get or increaſe my faith, my love to Chriſt, and to his people?* for once that you ask, *How ſhall I know that I believe or love?* Yet ſo contrary hath been and ſtill is the practice of moſt Chri-

Christians among us in this point, that I have heard it twenty times asked, *How shall I know that I truly love the Brethren?* for once that I have heard it demanded, *How should I bring my heart to love them better?* And the like I may say of love to Christ himself.

I should next have spoke of the second part of the Direction, *How much our Assurance and Comfort, will still depend on our Actual obedience.* But this will fall in in handling the two or three next following Directions.

DIRECTION XXIII.

23. *My next advice is this,* Think not that those doubts and troubles of minde, which are caused and continued by wilfull Disobedience, will ever be well healed but by the healing of that Disobedience: or that the same means must be used and will suffice to the cure of such troubles; which must be used and will suffice to cure the troubles of a tender-conscience, and of an obedient Christian, whose trouble is meerly through mistakes of their condition.

I Will begin with the later part of this Direction. He that is troubled upon meer mistakes may be quieted upon the removal of them. If he understood not the universal extent of Christs satisfaction, or of the Covenant or conditional Grant of Christ and Life in him: and if upon this

this he be troubled, as thinking that he is not included; the convincing him of his error may ſuffice to the removal of his trouble. If he be troubled through his miſtaking the nature of true Faith, or true Love, or other Graces, and ſo think that he hath them not when he hath them; the diſcovery of his error may be the quieting of his ſoul. The ſoul that is troubled upon ſuch miſtakes muſt be tenderly dealt with: Much more they that are diſquieted by groundleſs fears, or too deep apprehenſions of the wrath or juſtice of God, of the evil of ſin, and of their *unworthineſs*, and for want of fuller apprehenſions of the loving kindneſs of God, and the tender compaſſionate nature of Chriſt. We can ſcarce handle ſuch ſouls too gently. God would have all to be tenderly dealt with, that are tender of diſpleaſing and diſhonouring him by ſin. Gods own language may teach all Miniſters what language we ſhould uſe to ſuch, *Iſa.* 57. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. *Thus ſaith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe Name is Holy; I dwel in the high and holy place; with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For*

I will not contend for ever, neither will I be alwaies wroth: For the ſpirit ſhould fail before me, and the ſouls which I have made, &c. *But the wicked are like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt: There is no peace ſaith my God to the wicked.* Much more tender language may ſuch expect from Chriſt in the Goſpel, where is contained a fuller revelation of his Grace. If *Mary* a poor ſinfull woman lie weeping at his feet, and waſhing them with her tears, he hath not the heart to ſpurn her away; but openly proclaims the forgiveneſs of her many ſinnes. As ſoon as ever the heart of a ſinner is turned from his ſinnes, the heart of Chriſt is turned to him. The very ſumme of all the Goſpel is contained in thoſe precious words, which fully expreſs this, *Matth.* 11. 28, 29, 30. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Reſt. Take my yoak upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye ſhall finde Reſt unto your ſouls: For my yoak is eaſie and my burden is light.* When the Prodigal, *Luke* 15. 20. doth once come home to his Father, with ſorrow and ſhame confeſſing his unworthineſs, yea but reſolved to confeſs it; his Father preventeth

him,

him, and ſees him afarre off, and ſtaies not his coming but runs and meets him: and when he comes to him he doth not upbraid him with his ſins, nor ſay, *Thou Rebell, why haſt thou forſaken me, and preferred harlots and luxury before me?* nay he doth not ſo much as frown upon him: but compaſſionatly fals on his neck and kiſſeth him: Alas, God knows that a poor ſinner in this humbled troubled caſe, hath burden enough on his back already, and indeed more then he is able of himſelf to bear. The ſenſe of his own ſinfull folly and miſery is burden enough: If God ſhould adde to this his frowns and terrors, and ſhould ſpurn at a poor ſinner that lies proſtrate at his feet, in tears or terrours, who then ſhould be able to ſtand before him, or to look him in the face? But he will not break the bruiſed reed; he will not make heavier the burden of a ſinner. He cals them to come to him for Eaſe and Reſt, and not to oppreſs them or kill them with his terrours. We have not a King like *Rehoboam* that will multiply our preſſures; but one whoſe office it is to break our yoaks, and looſe our bonds and ſet us free. When he was a Preacher himſelf on earth, you may gather what Doctrine he preached by his

Text, which he choſe at one of his firſt publike Sermons; which as you may finde in *Luke* 4.18,19. was this, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the Goſpel to the poor; he hath ſent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of ſight to the blinde, to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* O if a poor bruiſed, wounded ſoul had but heard this Sermon from his Saviours own mouth; what heart-meltings would it have cauſed? what pangs of Love would it have raiſed in him! You would ſure have believed then that the Lord is gracious, when *All* (that heard him) *bare him witneſs, and wondred at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth,* Luke 4.22. I would deſire no more for the comfort of ſuch a ſoul then to ſee ſuch a ſight, and feel ſuch a feeling as the poor penitent Prodigal did, when he found himſelf in the arms of his Father, and felt the kiſſes of his mouth, and was ſurprized ſo unexpectedly with ſuch a torrent of Love. The ſoul that hath once ſeen and felt this, would never ſure have ſuch hard and doubtfull thoughts of God, except through ignorance they knew not whoſe arms they were that thus embraced

embraced them, or whose voice it was that thus bespoke them; or unless the remembrance of it were gone out of their mindes. You see then what is Gods own language to humbled Penitents, and what is the method of his dealings with them: And such must be the language and dealing of his Ministers: They must not wound when Christ would heal; nor make sad the heart that Christ would comfort, and would not have made sad, *Ezek.* 13.22.

But will this means serve turn, or must the same course be taken, to remove the sorrows of the wilfully disobedient? No, God takes another course himself, and prescribes another course to his Ministers, and requires another course from the sinner himself. But still remember who it is that I speak of: It is not the ordinary unavoidable infirmities of the Saints that I speak of; such as they cannot be rid of, though they fain would; such as *Paul* speaks of, *Rom.* 7.19. *The good that I would do I do not:* and *when I would do good evil is present with me:* And *Gal.* 5. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit,* &c. so that we cannot do the things that we would. A true Christian would Love God more perfectly, and Delight in him more

more abundantly, and bring every thought in ſubjection to his Will, and ſubdue the very remnants of carnal concupiſcence, that there ſhould be no ſtirrings of luſt or unjuſt anger, or worldly deſires, or pride within him; and that no vain word might paſs his lips: all this he would do but he cannot. Striving againſt theſe unavoidable infirmities is conquering.

But though we cannot keep under every motion of concupiſcence, we can forbear the execution. Anger will ſtirre upon provocations; But we may reſtrain it in degree, that it ſet us not in a flame, and do not much diſtemper or diſcompoſe our mindes: and we can forbid our tongues all raging, furious or abuſive words in our Anger; all curſing, ſwearing or reproachfull ſpeaking. If an envious thought againſt our Brother do ariſe in our hearts, becauſe he is prefer'd before us, we may hate it and repreſs it, and chide our hearts for it, and command our tongues to ſpeak well of him, and no evil. Some pride and ſelf-eſteem will remain and be ſtirring in us, do what we can, it is a ſinne ſo deeply rooted in our corrupt Natures: But yet we can deteſt it, and reſiſt it, and meet with abhorrence our ſelf-conceited thoughts, and rejoy-

rejoycings in our own reputations and fame, and inward heart-risings against those that undervalue us and stand in the way of our Repute; and we may forbear our boasting language, and our contestings for our credit, and our excuses of our sinnes, and our backbitings and secret defaming of those that cross us in the way of credit: We may forbear our quarrels and estrangements and dividings from our Brethren, and stiff insisting on our own conceits, and expecting that others should make our Judgements their Rule, and say and do as we would have them, and all dance after our pipe; all which are the effects of inward Pride. We cannot, while we are on earth, be free from all inordinate Love of the world, and the Riches and Honours of it; but we may so watch against it and repress it, as that it shall neither be preferred before God, nor draw us to unlawfull waies of gain, by lying, deceit and overreaching our Brethren; by stealing, unjust or unmercifull dealings, oppressing the poor, and insulting over those that are in the way of our thriving, and crushing them that would hinder our aspiring designes, and treading them down that will not bow to us, and taking revenge

venge of them that have croſſed or diſparaged us, or cruelly exacting all our Rights and Debts of the poor; and ſqueezing the purſes of ſubjects or tenants, or thoſe that we bargain with, like a ſponge, as long as any thing will come out: Yea we may ſo farre ſubdue our love of the world, as that it ſhall not hinder us from being mercifull to the poor, compaſſionate to our ſervants and labourers, and bountifull to our power in doing good works: nor yet ſhut out Gods ſervice from our families or cloſets, nor rob him of our frequent, affectionate thoughts, eſpecially on the Lords day. So for ſenſuality or the pleaſing of our fleſh more immediatly; we ſhall never on earth be wholly freed from inordinate motions, and temptations, and fleſhly deſires, and urgent inclinations and ſolicitations to forbidden things. But yet we may reſtrain our Appetite by reaſon, ſo farre that it bring us not to gluttony and drunkenneſs, and a ſtudying for our bellies, and pampering of our fleſh, or a taking care for it, and making proviſion to ſatisfie its luſts, *Rom.* 13. 14. We may forbear the obeying it, in exceſs of Apparel, in undecent, ſcandalous or time-waſting Recreations, in uncleanneſs or unchaſt

ſpeeches or behaviour, or the reading of amorous Books and Sonnets, or feeding our eyes or thoughts on filthy or enticing objects, or otherwaies wilfully blowing the fire of luſt: So alſo for the performance of Duty: We ſhall never in this life be able to Hear or Read ſo diligently, and underſtandingly or affectionately as we would do: nor to remember or profit by what we hear, as we deſire. But yet we can bring our ſelves to the Congregation, and not preferre our eaſe or buſineſs or any vain thing before Gods Word and Worſhip, or loath or deſpiſe it becauſe of ſome weakneſs in the ſpeaker: And we may in a great meaſure reſtrain our thoughts from wandring, and force our ſelves to attend; and labour when we come home to recall it to minde. We cannot call on God ſo fervently, believingly or delightfully as we would: But yet we may do it ſincerely as we can, and do it conſtantly. We cannot inſtruct our children and ſervants, and reprove or exhort our neighbours, with that boldneſs, or love and compaſſion and diſcretion and meet expreſſions, as we would: But yet we may do it faithfully and frequently as we are able.

So that you may ſee in all this what ſin

ſin it is that *Paul* ſpeaks of, *Rom.*7. when he ſaith, When he would do good, evil is preſent with him; and that he is lead captive to the Law of ſin, and ſerves the Law of ſin with his fleſh: and *Gal.*4.17. when he ſaith, *We cannot do the things that we would*; he ſpeaks not of wilfull ſinning, or groſs ſin, but of unavoidable infirmities; whereby alſo we are too often drawn into a committing of many ſinnes which we might avoid (for ſo the beſt doe.)

And becauſe you may often reade and hear of ſinnes of Infirmity, as diſtinguiſhed from other ſinnes, let me here give you notice, that this word may be taken in ſeveral ſenſes, and that there are three ſeveral ſorts of ſinnes of Infirmity in the Godly.

1. There are thoſe ſinnes which a man cannot avoid though he would: which are in the gentleſt ſenſe called *Sins of Infirmity*. Here note 1. That *Adam* had none ſuch. 2. And that the reaſon of them is becauſe 1. Our Reaſon which ſhould direct, and our Wils themſelves which ſhould command, are both Imperfect. 2. And our Faculties that ſhould be commanded and directed are by ſin grown impotent and obſtinate, and have contracted

tracted a rebelling disobedient dispositiion. 3. And that degree of Grace, which the best attain to in this life, is not such as wholly to overcome either the imperfection of the guiding and commanding faculty, or the rebellion of the obeying faculties. Otherwise if our own Wils were perfect, and the rebellion of the inferiour faculties cured, no man could then say, *The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do.* For the Will would so fully command, that all would obey, and it self being perfect, all would be perfect. And therefore in Heaven it is and will be so.

I know Philosophers conclude that all acts of the inferiour Faculties are but acts commanded by the Will: It should be so I confess: It is the office of the Will to command, and the understanding to direct, and the rest to obey. But in our state of sinfull imperfection the soul is so distempered and corrupted, that the Will cannot fully rule those Faculties that it should rule; so that it may be said, *I would forbear sin but cannot.* For 1. The understanding is become a dark, imperfect Directer. 2. The Will is become an imperfect Receiver of the Understandings Directions; yea an opposer, as being

tainted

tainted with the neighbourhood of a distempered ſenſe. 3. When the Will is rectified by Grace, it is but in part; and therefore when *Paul* or any holy man ſaith, *I would do good*, and *I would not do evil*, they mean it not of a perfect willingneſs, but of a ſincere; to wit, that this is the main bent of their Will, and the reſolved prevalent act of it, is for good. 4. When the Will doth command, yet the commanded Faculties do refuſe to obey, through an unfitneſs, or impotency and corruption. 1. The Will hath but an imperfect command of the Underſtanding (I mean as to the exerciſe of the act, in which reſpect it commandeth it, and not as to the ſpecification of the act.) A man may truly and ſtrongly deſire to know more, and apprehend things more clearly, and yet cannot. 2. The Will hath but an imperfect command of the Phantaſie or Thoughts; ſo that a man may truly ſay, *I would think more frequently, more intentively, and more orderly of good, and leſs of vanity; and yet I cannot.* For objects and paſſions may force the Phantaſie and Cogitations in ſome degree. 3. The Will hath but an imperfect command of the paſſions: ſo that a man may truly ſay, *I would not be troubled,*

bled, or afraid, or grieved, or disquieted, or angry; but I cannot choose, and *I would mourn more for sinne, and be more afraid of sinning and of Gods displeasure, and more zealous for God, and more delighted in him, and joy more in holy things, but I cannot.* For these passions lie so open to the assault of objects (having the senses for their inlet, and the moveable spirits for their seat or instruments) that even when the Will commands them one way, an object may force them in part against the Wils command, as we finde sensibly in cases of fear, and sorrow or anger, which we can force a man to whether he will or no. And if there be no contradicting object, yet cannot the Will excite these passions to what height it shall command. For their motion depends as much (and more) on the lively manner of representing the Object, and the working nature and weight of the object represented, and upon the heat and nobility of the spirits, and temperature of the body, as upon the command of the Will. 4. Much less can the Will command out all vicious habits and sensual or corrupt inclinations: and therefore a true Christian may well say in respect of these, that he would be more holy, heavenly and disposed

diſpoſed to good, and leſs to evil, but he cannot. 5. As for complacency and diſplacency, liking or diſliking, love and hatred, ſo farre as they are paſſions, I have ſpoke of them before: but ſo farre as they are the immediate acts of the Will (Willing and Nilling) they are not properly ſaid to be commanded by it, but elicit, or acted by it: (wherein how farre it hath power is a moſt noble Queſtion; but unfit for this place or your capacity.) And thus you ſee that there are many Acts of the Soul, beſide Habits, which the Will cannot now perfectly command, and ſo a Chriſtian cannot be what he would be, nor do the things that he would: And theſe are the firſt ſort of ſins of Infirmity.

If you ſay, *Sure theſe can be no ſinnes becauſe we are not willing of them, and there is no more ſin then there is will in it.* I anſwer, 1. We were in *Adam* willing of that ſin which cauſed them. 2. We are in ſome degree inclining in our Wils to ſin, though God have that prevalent part and determination, which in comparative caſes doth denominate them. 3. The Underſtanding and Will may be moſt hainouſly guilty where they do not conſent, in that they do not more ſtrongly diſſent,

diſſent, and more potently and rulingly command all the ſubject Faculties. And ſo a Negation of the Wils act, or of ſuch a Degree of it, as is neceſſary to the Regiment of the ſenſual part, is a deep guilt, and great offence, and it may be ſaid, that there is Will in this ſin. It is morally or reputatively voluntary, though not naturally: becauſe the Will doth not its office when it ſhould: As a man is guilty of voluntary murder of his own childe, that ſtands by and ſeeth his ſervant kill him, and doth not do his beſt to hinder him. I would this were better underſtood by ſome Divines: For I think that the commoneſt guilt of the Reaſon and Will in our actual ſinnes, is by Omiſſion of the exerciſe of their Authority to hinder it: And that moſt ſinnes are more bruitiſh, as to the true efficient cauſe, then many imagine; and yet they are humane or moral Acts too, and the ſoul nevertheleſs guilty; becauſe the commanded Faculties performed not their office, and ſo are the Moral or Imputative cauſes, and ſo the great culpable cauſes of the fact. (But I am drawn nearer to Philoſophy and points beyond your reach then I intended: a fault that I muſt be ſtill reſiſting in all my Writings, being upon

upon every occurring difficulty carried to forget my ſubject, and the capacity of the meaneſt to whom I write: But what you underſtand not paſs over and go to the next.

The ſecond kinde of ſinnes of Infirmity are, *The ſmaller ſort of ſinnes which we may forbear if we will*; that is, *If we be actually, though not perfectly, yet prevalently Willing; or if our Wils be determined to forbear them: or if the chief part of the Will actually be for ſuch forbearance.* The firſt ſort are called ſinnes of Infirmity in an Abſolute ſenſe. Theſe laſt I call ſinnes of Infirmity in both an Abſolute and Comparative ſenſe: that is, both as they proceed from our inward corruption, which through the weakneſs of the ſoul having but little grace, is not fully reſtrained, and alſo as it is compared with groſs ſinnes: And ſo we may call idle words, and raſh expreſſions in our haſt, and ſuch like, *Sins of Infirmity*, in compariſon of Murder, Perjury, or the like groſs ſinnes; which we commonly call *Crimes*, or *Wickedneſs*, when the former we uſe to call but *Faults*. Theſe Infirmities are they which the Papiſts (and ſome Learned Divines of our own; as *Rob. Baronius* in his excellent Tractate

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de Peccat. Mortali & Veniali) do call *Venial sinnes*: Some of them in a fair and honeſt ſenſe, *viz. Becauſe they are ſuch ſinnes as a true Chriſtian may live and die in, though not unrepented or unreſiſted, yet not ſubdued ſo farre as to forſake or ceaſe from the practice of them; and yet they are pardoned.* But other Papiſts call them *Venial* ſinnes in a wicked ſenſe, as if they needed no pardon, or deſerved not eternal puniſhment. (And why ſhould they call them *Venial* if they need not pardon?) A juſtified man liveth in the daily practice of ſome vain thoughts, or the frequent commiſſion of ſome other ſinnes, which by his utmoſt diligence he might reſtrain: But he liveth not in the frequent practice of Adultery, Drunkenneſs, Falſe-witneſſing, Slandering, Hating his Brother, *&c.*

Yet obſerve that though the forementioned leſſer ſinnes are called *Infirmities*, in regard of the matter of them; yet they may be ſo committed in regard of the end and manner of them, as may make them crimes or groſs ſinnes: As for example, If one ſhould uſe idle words wilfully, reſolvedly, without reſtraint, reluctancy or tenderneſs of conſcience, this were groſs ſinning: or the neerer it comes

comes to this, and the more wilfulneſs or neglect or evil ends there is in the ſmalleſt forbidden action, the worſe it is, and the groſſer. And obſerve (of which more anon) that the true bounds or difference between groſs ſinnes, and thoſe leſſer faults, which we call Infirmities, cannot be given; (I think, by any man; I am ſure not by me) either as to the Act it ſelf, to ſay, juſt what Acts are groſs ſins and what not; or elſe, as to the manner of committing them; as to ſay, Juſt how much of the Will muſt go to make a groſs ſinne; or Juſt how farre a man may proceed in the degree of evil intents; or how farre in the frequency of ſinning, before it muſt be called a groſs ſinne.

3. The third ſort of ſinnes which may be called *Sins of Infirmity*, are theſe laſt mentioned groſs ſinnes themſelves, ſo far as they are found in the Regenerate: Theſe are groſs ſinnes put in oppoſition to the former ſort of Infirmities; but our Divines uſe to call them all *Sins of Infirmity*, in oppoſition to the ſinnes of Unbelievers, who are utterly unholy. And they call them *Sins of Infirmity* 1. Becauſe the perſon that committeth them is not dead in ſinnes, as the Unregenerate are, but

but only diſeaſed, wounded and infirm. 2. Becauſe that they are not committed with ſo full conſent of Will, as thoſe of the Unregenerate are; but only after much ſtriving, or at leaſt contrary to Habitual Reſolutions, though not againſt Actual.

Here we are in very great Difficulties, and full of Controverſies: Some ſay, that theſe groſs ſinnes do extinguiſh true Grace, and are inconſiſtent with it: and that *David* and *Peter* were out of the ſtate of Grace till they did again Repent: Others ſay, that they were in the ſtate of Grace and not at al ſo liable to condemnation, but that if they had died in the Act, they had been ſaved: becauſe *There is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus:* and that therefore all the ſins of Believers are alike ſins of Infirmity, pardoned on the ſame terms: and therefore as a raſh word may be pardoned without a particular repentance, ſo poſſibly may theſe groſs ſins. To others this ſeems dangerous and contrary to Scripture, and therefore they would fain finde out a way between both: But how to do it clearly and ſatisfactorily is not eaſie (at leaſt, to me, who have been long upon it, but am yet much in the dark in it.) I think it is plain that ſuch perſons are not totally unſanctified by

their sin: I believe that Christs interest is Habitually more in their Wils, then is the interest of the flesh or world, at that very time when they are sinning, and so Christs interest is least as to their Actual Willing: And so sinne prevaileth for that time against the Act of their Faith and Love, but not wholly against the prevalent part of the Habit. And therefore when the shaking winde of that stormy temptation is over, the soul will return to Christ by Repentance, Love, and renewed Obedience. But then to know what state he is Relatively in this while, as to his Justification and Reconciliation and right to Glory, is the point of exceeding difficulty. Whether as we distinguish of Habitual Faith and Love and Obedience, which he hath not lost; and Actual, which he hath lost; so we must make some answerable distinction of Justification (Habitual and Actual it cannot be) into Virtual Justification, which he hath not lost, and Actual Justification which he hath lost? or into Plenary Justification (which he hath not) and Imperfect Justification, wanting a further Act to make it Plenary (which may remain.) But still, it will be more difficult to shew punctually what this Imperfect

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or Virtual Juſtification is? and moſt difficult to ſhew, Whether with the loſs of Actual Plenary Juſtification, and the loſs of a Plenary Right to Heaven, a mans ſalvation may conſiſt; that is, Whether if he ſhould die in that condition, he ſhould be ſaved or condemned? Or if it be ſaid, that *he ſhall certainly repent*, 1. Yet ſuch a ſuppoſition may be put, while he yet repenteth not; for the enquiry into his ſtate; How farre there is any interciſion of his Juſtification, Pardon, Adoption or Right to ſalvation? 2. And whether it can fully be proved that it is impoſſible (or that which never was or ſhall be) for a Regenerate man to die in the very act of a groſs ſinne (as ſelf-murder or the like?) For my part I think God hath purpoſely left us here in the dark, that we may not be too bold in ſinning, but may know that whether the groſs ſins of Believers be ſuch as deſtroy their Juſtification and right to Glory, prevalently, or not, yet certainly they leave them in the dark, as to any Certainty of their Juſtification or Salvation.

And then more dark is it and impoſſible to diſcover, How farre a man may go in theſe groſſer ſinnes; and yet have the prevalent habits of Grace? As to the

former Queſtion about the interciſion of Juſtification, I am ſomewhat inclinable to think, that the habit of Faith hath more to do in our Juſtification then I have formerly thought, and may as properly be ſaid to be the condition as the act: and that as long as a man is (in a prevalent degree) habitually a Believer, he is not only imperfectly and virtually Juſtified, but ſo farre actually Juſtified, that he ſhould be ſaved, though he were cut off before he actually Repent: And that he being already habitually Penitent, having a hatred of all ſin as ſin, ſhould be ſaved, if meer want of opportunity do prevent the Act: And that only thoſe ſinnes do bring a man into a ſtate of condemnation, or prove him in ſuch, which conſiſt not with the *Habitual Preheminence* of Chriſts intereſt in our ſouls above the intereſt of the fleſh and world; And that *David*'s and *Peter*'s were ſuch as did conſiſt with the preheminence of Chriſts intereſt in the habit. But withall, that ſuch groſs ſinnes muſt needs be obſervable, and ſo the ſoul that is guilty doth ordinarily know its guilt, yea and think of it: And that it is inconſiſtent with this habitual Repentance, not to Repent actually as ſoon as Time is afforded, and the violence of paſſion

passion so farre allaied, as that the soul may recollect it self, and Reason have its free use: And that he that hath this leasure and opportunity for the free use of Reason, and yet doth not Repent, it is a sign that the intereſt of the flesh is habitually as well as actually stronger then Christs intereſt in him. I say, in this doubtfull case, I am most inclining to judge thus: But as I would have no man take this as my resolved Judgement, much less as certain Truth, and least of all, to venture on sinne or impenitency ever the more for such a doubtfull opinion, which doth not conclude him to be certainly unjustified; so I am utterly ignorant both how long sensual passions may possibly rage and keep the soul from sober Consideration; or how farre they may interpose in the very time of Consideration and frustrate it, and prevail against it: and so keep the sinner from actual Repenting, or at least, from a full ingenuous acknowledgement and bewailing of the sin which is necessary to full Repentance: and how long Repentance may be so farre stifled, as to remain only in some inward grudgings of conscience, and trouble of minde, hindered from breaking out into free Confession (which seemeth to have

been *David*'s case long.) Nay it is impossible to know just how long a man may live in the very practice of such gross sin, before Christs habitual Intereſt above the flesh be either overthrown, or proved not to be there? and how oft a man that hath true Grace may commit such sins: These things are undiscernable; besides that none can punctually define a gross sin so as to exclude every degree of Infirmities, and include every degree of such gross sin.

Perhaps you will marvell why I run so farre in this Point; It is both to give you as much light as I can, what sins they be which be to be called Infirmities, and so what sins they be that do forbid that gentle, comforting way of cure, when the soul is troubled for them, which must be used with those that are troubled more then needs, or upon mistakes: and also to convince you of this weighty Truth, That *Our Comfort yea and Assurance hath a great dependance on our actual obedience: yea so great that the least obedient sort of sincere Christians cannot by ordinary means have any Assurance: and the most obedient (if other necessaries concurre) will have the most Assurance: and for the middle sort; their Assurance will rise and fall, ordinarily*

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With their obedience: ſo that there's no Way to comfort ſuch offending Chriſtians but by reducing them to fuller obedience by Faith and Repentance, that ſo the evidences of their Juſtification may be clear, and the great impediments of their Aſſurance and Comfort be removed.

This I will yet make clearer to you by its Reaſons, and then tell you how to apply it to your ſelf.

1. No man can be ſure of his ſalvation or Juſtification but he that is ſure of his true Faith and Love. And no man can be ſure of his true Faith and Love, but he that is ſure of the ſincerity of his obedience: For true Faith doth ever take God for our great Soveraign, and Chriſt for our Lord-Redeemer, and containeth a Covenant-delivery of a mans ſelf to God and the Redeemer to be Ruled by him, as a Subject, Childe, Servant and Spouſe. This is not done ſincerely and ſavingly unleſs there be an actual and habitual Reſolution to obey God and the Redeemer, before all creatures, and againſt all temptations that would draw us from him. To obey Chriſt a little, and the fleſh more, is no true obedience: If the fleſh can do more with us to draw us to ſin, then Faith and Obedience do, to keep us from ſin,

ordinarily; this is no true Faith or Obedience. If Christ have not the Soveraignty in the soul, and his Interest be not the most predominant and potent, we are no true Believers. Now it is plain, that the Interest of the world and flesh doth actually prevail, when a man is actually committing a known sinne, and omitting a known duty: and then it is certain that Habits are known but by the Acts. And therefore it must needs be that the soul that most sinneth must needs be most in doubt whether the Interest of Christ or the flesh be predominant? and so whether his obedience be true or no? and so whether he did sincerely take Christ for his Soveraign? and that is, whether he be a true Believer? For when a man is enquiring into the state of his soul, Whether he do subject himself to Christ as his only Soveraign? and whether the Authority and Love of Christ will do more with him, then the temptations of the world, flesh and devil? he hath no way to be resolved but by feeling the Pulse of his own Will? And if he say, *I am willing to obey Christ before the flesh,* and yet do actually live in an obedience to the flesh before Christ, he is deceived in his own Will: for this is no saving Willingness. A wicked man may

may have some will to obey Christ principally: but having more will to the contrary, *viz.* to please the flesh before Christ, therefore he is wicked still: so that you see in our self-examination, the business is for the most part finally Resolved into our sincere actual obedience. For thus we proceed: We first finde, *He that believeth and loveth Christ sincerely, shall be saved.* Then we proceed, *He that believeth sincerely taketh Christ for his Soveraign.* Then, *He that truly taketh Christ for his Soveraign, doth truly resolve to obey him and his Laws, before the world, flesh or devil.* Then, *He that truly resolveth thus to obey Christ before all, doth sincerely perform his resolution, and doth so obey him.* For that is no true resolution ordinarily, that never comes to performance. And here we are cast unavoidably to try whether we do perform our resolutions by actual obedience? before we can sit down with setled Peace: much more before we get Assurance. Now those that are diligent and carefull in obeying, and have greatest conquest over their corruptions, and do most seldom yield to temptations, but do most notably and frequently conquer them, these have the cleerest discovery of the performance of their resolu-

tions by obedience; and consequently the fullest Assurance: But they that are oftenest overcome by temptations, and yield most to sin, and live most disobediently, must needs be furthest from Assurance of the sincerity of their obedience, and consequently of their salvation.

2. God himself hath plainly made our actual obedience, not only a sign of true Faith, but a secondary part of the condition of our salvation as promised in the New Covenant. And therefore it is as impossible to be saved without it, as without Faith: supposing that the person have opportunity to obey, in which case only it is made necessary as a condition. This I will but cite several Scriptures to prove, and leave you to peruse them if you be unsatisfied. *Rom.*8.1, to 14. They that are in Christ Jesus, are they that walk, not after the flesh but after the Spirit. *If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye by the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* Rev.22.14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of Life, and may enter in by the Gate into the City.* Heb.5.9. *He is become the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.* Matth. 11. 28, 29, 30. *Take my yoak upon you, for it is easie,*

easie, and my burden for it is light. Learn of me to be *meek and lowly*, &c. *and ye shall finde Rest*, &c. *John* 16. 27. *Luke* 13. 24. *Phil.* 2. 12. *Rom.* 2. 7, 10. *Joh.* 15. 12, 17. & 14. 21. *Mat.* 5. 44. *Luk.* 6. 27, 35. *Pro.* 8. 17, 21. *Matth.* 10. 37. 1 *Tim.* 6. 18, 19. 2 *Tim.* 2. 5, 12. *Matth.* 25. 41, 42. *Jam.* 2. 21, 22, 23, 24, 26. & 1. 12. & 2. 5. *Prov.* 1. 23. & 28. 13. *Luk.* 13. 3, 5. *Matth.* 12. 37. & 11. 25, 26. & 6. 12, 14, 15. 1 *John* 1. 9. *Act.* 8. 22. & 3. 19. & 22. 16. *Luke* 6. 37. 1 *Pet.* 4. 18. & 1. 2, 22. *Rom.* 6. 16. with abundance more the like. Now when a poor sinner that hath oft fallen into Drunkennes, Railing, Strife, Envying, *&c.* shall reade that these are the works of the flesh, and that for these things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; and that every man shall be judged according to his works, and according to what he hath done in the flesh; and that they that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God; it cannot be but that his Assurance of salvation must needs have so great a dependance on his obedience, as that these sins will diminish it. When he reades *Rom.* 6. 16. *His servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sinne unto death, or of obedience unto Righteousnes*; he must needs think, how

how ſuch a time and ſuch a time he obeyed ſinne: and the oftner and the more wilfully he did it, the doubtfuller will his caſe be. Eſpecially if he be yet in a ſinfull courſe, which he might avoid, whether of groſs ſinne, or any wilfull ſinne, it cannot be but this will obſcure the evidence of his obedience. Men cannot judge beyond evidence: and he that hath not the evidence of his true obedience, hath not the evidence of the ſincerity of his Faith.

3. Moreover, Aſſurance and Comfort are Gods gifts; and without his gracious aid we cannot attain them. But God will not give ſuch gifts to his children while they ſtand out in diſobedience, but when they carefully pleaſe him. Paternal Juſtice requires this.

4. And it would do them abundance of hurt, and God much diſhonour if he ſhould either tell them juſt how oft or how farre they may ſin and yet be ſaved; or yet ſhould keep up their Peace and Comforts as well in their greateſt diſobedience, as in their tendereſt carefull walking with him. But theſe things I ſpoke of before, and formerly elſewhere.

You ſee then that though ſome obedient, tender Chriſtians may yet on ſeveral occaſions

occasions be deprived of Assurance; yet ordinarily no other but they have Assurance: And that Assurance and Comfort will rise and fall with obedience.

And for all the Antinomian objections against this, as if it were a leading men to their own righteousnes from Christ, I referre you to the twenty Arguments which I before laid you down to prove that we may and must fetch our Assurance and Comfort from our own works and Graces: and so from our own Evangelical Righteousnes, which is subordinate to Christs Righteousnes (which he speaks of, *Matth.* 25. last; and in fourty places more;) though we must have no thoughts of a Legal Righteousnes (according to the Law of Works or Ceremonies) in our selves. They may as well say that a woman doth forsake her husband, because she comforteth her self in this, that she hath not forsaken him or been false and unchast, thence gathering that he will not give her a bill of Divorce: Or that a servant forsakes his Master; or a subject his Prince; or a Parent is forsaken by his childe; because they comfort themselves in their Obedience and Loyalty, gathering thence that they are not flat Rebels, and shall not be used as Rebels! Or that any

any that enter Covenant with Superiors do forſake them becauſe they comfort themſelves in their keeping Covenant, as a ſign that the Covenant ſhall be kept with them: All theſe are as wiſe collections, as to gather that a man forſakes Chriſt and his Righteouſneſs, and ſetteth up his own in ſtead of it, becauſe he looks at his not forſaking, refuſing and vilifying of Chriſt, his Love and faithfull obedience to Chriſt, as comfortable ſignes that Chriſt will not forſake and reject him. Do theſe men think that a Rebell may have the love of his Prince, and as much comfort from him as a Loyal ſubject? or a whoriſh woman have as much love and comfort from her husband, as a faithfull Wife? or a ſtubborn rebellious ſon or ſervant have as much love and comfort from their Father or Maſter as the dutifull? If there be ſo near a Relation as hitherto we have ſuppoſed, between a Soveraign and ſubjection to him, and a Husband and Marriage-faithfulneſs to him, and a Maſter and ſervice to him, and a Father and loving obedience to him; it is ſtrange that men ſhould ſuppoſe ſuch a ſtrange oppoſition, as theſe men do? Certainly God doth not ſo when he ſaith, *Mal.* 1.6. *If I be a Father where is mine honour?*

honour? and if I be a Master where is my fear? And *Isa.* 1. 3, 4. *Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me: The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Asse his Masters crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider: Ah sinfull Nation! a people laden with iniquity! a seed of evil doers! children that are corrupters! they have forsaken the Lord! they have provoked the holy one of Israel to anger! they are gone away backward.* And *Jer.* 3. 19. *Thou shalt call me my Father, and shalt not depart away from me.* And 2 *Tim.* 2. 19. *The Lord knoweth who are his:* and *let him that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.* And *Psal.* 66. 18. *If I delight in iniquity or regard it, God will not hear my prayers,* saith *David* himself. Doubtless *Paul* did not forsake Christs Righteousnes by confidence in his own, when he saith, *This is our rejoycing, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation among you,* 2 Cor. 1. 12. with many the like which I before mentioned. Nor doth the Lord Jesus at the day of Judgement turn men off from his Righteousnes, when he saith, *Well done good and faithfull*

faithfull ſervant; becauſe thou haſt been faithfull in a very little, I will make thee ruler over much, Luke 19.17. Mat.25.23. and cals them thereupon Righteous, ſaying, *And the righteous ſhall go into life everlaſting*, Mat.25.laſt.

It remains now that I further acquaint you what uſe you ſhould make of this obſervation, concerning the dependance of Aſſurance upon actual obedience. And 1. I adviſe you, if your ſoul remain in doubts and troubles, and you cannot enjoy God in any way of peace and comfort, nor ſee any clear evidence of the ſincerity of your faith; take a ſerious view of your obedience: and faithfully ſurvey your heart and life, and your daily carriage to God in both. See whether there be nothing that provokes God to an unuſual Jealouſie. If there be, it is either the increaſe of ſome carnal intereſt in your heart, or elſe the wilfull or negligent falling into ſome actual ſinne, of commiſſion or omiſſion. In the making of this ſearch you have need to be exceeding cautelous; for if I have any acquaintance with the myſtery of this buſineſs, your peace or trouble, comfort or diſcomfort, will mainly depend on this. And your care muſt lie in this point; that you

you diligently avoid these two extreams: First, That you do not deal negligently and unfaithfully with your own soul, as either unwilling to know the truth, or unwilling to be at that labour which you must needs be at before you can know it. Secondly, That you do not either condemn your self when your conscience doth acquit you, or vex your soul with needless scruples, or make unavoidable or ordinary infirmities to seem such wilfull hainous sinnes, as should quite break your setled peace. O how narrow is the path between these two mistaken roads? and how hard a thing, and how rare is it to finde it and to keep in it? For your self and all tender conscienc'd Christians that are heartily willing to be Ruled by Christ, I would perswade you equally to beware of both these: becaus some souls are as inclinable to the later extream as to the former (during their troubles.) But for the most Christians in the world, I would have them first and principally avoid the former, and that with farre greater diligence then the later. For 1. Naturally all mens hearts are farre proner to deal too remisly, yea unfaithfully with themselves in searching after their sins, then too scrupulously and tenderly.

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The beſt men have ſo much pride and carnal ſelf-love, that it will ſtrongly incline them to excuſe, or mince, or hide their ſinnes, and to think farre lightlier and more favourably of it then they ſhould do, becauſe it is theirs. How was the caſe altered with *Judah* towards *Thamar*, when he once ſaw it was his own act. How was *Davids* zeal for Juſtice allaied, as ſoon as he heard, *Thou art the man?* This is the moſt common cauſe why God is fain to hold our eyes on our tranſgreſſions by force, becauſe we are ſo loth to do it more voluntarily: and why he openeth our ſinne in ſuch crimſon and ſcarlet colours to us; becauſe we are ſo apt either to look on them as nothing, or to ſhut our eyes and over-look them: and why God doth hold us ſo long on the rack, becauſe we would ſtill eaſe our ſelves by uningenuous excuſes and extenuations: and why God doth break the skin ſo oft and keep open our wounds; becauſe we are ſtill healing them by ſuch carnal ſhifts. This proud ſin-excuſing diſtemper needs no other proof or diſcovery, then our great tenderneſs and backwardneſs in ſubmitting to reproofs: How long do we excuſe ſinne, and defend our pretended innocency, as long we can finde a word

to

to say for it. Doth not daily experience of this sad distemper even in most of the godly, discover fully to us, that most men (yea naturally all) are farre proner to over-look their sinnes, and deal unfaithfully and negligently in the triall; then to be too tender, and to charge themselves too deep.

Besides, If a Christian be heartily willing to deal impartially and search to the quick, yet the heart is lamentably deceitfull, that he shall over-look much evil in it, when he hath done his best. And the devil will be farre more industrious to provoke and help you to hide, excuse and extenuate sinne, then to open it, and see it as it is. His endeavour to drive poor souls into terrours, is usually but when he can no longer keep them in presumption: When he can hide their sin no longer, nor make it seem small to keep them in impenitency, then he will make it seem unpardonable and remedilesse, if he can: but usually not before. So that you see the frame of most mens spirits doth require them, to be rather over-jealous in searching after their sinnes, then over-carelesse and confident of themselves.

2. Besides this; I had rather of the two

two that Christians would suspect and search too much then too little, because there is a hundred times more danger in seeing sinne less then it is, or overlooking it, then in seeing it greater then it is, and being over-fearfull. The later mistake may bring us into sorrow; and make our lives uncomfortable to us (and therefore should be avoided:) but usually it doth not endanger our happiness; but is often made a great occasion of our good. But the former mistake may hazzard our everlasting salvation, and so bring us to remediless trouble.

3. Yea, lest you should say, *This is sad language to comfort a distressed wounded soul*, let me adde this one Reason more. So farre as I can learn by reading the Scriptures, and by long experience of very many souls under troubles of conscience, *It is most commonly some notable cherished corruption that breedeth and feedeth the sad uncomfortable state of most professours, except those who by melancholy or very great ignorance, are so weak in their Intellectuals, as that they are uncapable of making any true discovery of their condition, and of passing a right judgement upon themselves thereupon.*

Least

Least I should make sad any soul that God would not have sad, let me desire you to observe, 1. That I say but *of most Professors*, not all: For I doubt not but God may hide his face for some time from some of the holiest and wisest of Believers, for several and great reasons. 2. Do but well observe most of the humble obedient Christians that you know to lie under any long and sad distress of minde, and you will finde that they are generally of one of the two forementioned sorts: either so ignorant as not to know well what faith is, or what the conditions of the Covenant are, or what is the extent of the promise, or the full sufficiency of Christs satisfaction for all sinners, or what are the evidences by which they may try themselves: Or else they are Melancholy persons whose fancy is still molested with these perturbing vapours and their understandings so clouded and distempered, that Reason is not free. And so common is this later, that in my observation, of all the Christians that have lived in any long and deep distress of minde, six if not ten for one have been deeply Melancholy; except those that feed their troubles by disobedience. So that besides these ignorant and Melancholy

choly persons, and disorderly declining Christians, the number of wounded spirits I think is very small, in comparison of the rest. Indeed it is usual for many at or shortly after their first change to be under trouble and deep fears: But that is but while the sense of former sinne is fresh upon their hearts. The sudden discovery of so deep a guilt, and so great a danger, which a man did never know before, must needs amaze and affright the soul: and if that fear remain long where right means are either not known or not used, for the cure, it is no wonder: and sometimes it will be long if the righteſt means be used. But for those that have been long in the Profession of holiness, and yet lye, or fall again, under troubles of soul (except those before excepted) I would have them make a diligent search, whether God do not observe either some fleshly interest incroach upon his Right; or some actual sin to be cherished in their hearts or conversations?

And here let me tell you, when you are making this search, what particulars they be which I would have you to be most jealous of. 1. The former sort which I call *contrary carnal interest incroaching on Christs Right*, are they that you must look

look after with farre more diligence then your actual ſinnes. 1. Becauſe they are the farre greateſt and moſt dangerous of all ſinnes, and the root of all the reſt: for as God is the End and Chief Good of every Saint, ſo theſe ſinnes do ſtand up againſt him as our End and Chief good; and carry away the ſoul by that Act which we call *ſimply willing, or complacency*, and ſo theſe intereſts are mens Idols, and reſiſt Gods very Soveraignty and perfect Goodneſs, that is, They are againſt God himſelf as our God. Whereas thoſe which I now call Actual ſinnes as diſtinct from theſe, are but the violation of particular Precepts, and againſt Gods means and Laws directly, and but remotely or indirectly againſt his Godhead; and they have but that act of our Will which we call *Election, Conſent or Uſe*, which is proper to Means, and not to the End. 2. Becauſe as theſe ſinnes are the moſt damnable, ſo they lye deepeſt at the heart, and are not ſo eaſily diſcovered. It is ordinary with many to have a Covetous, Worldly, Ambitious heart, even damnably ſuch, that yet have wit to carry it fairly without; yea and ſeem truly Religious to themſelves and others. 3. Becauſe theſe ſinnes are the moſt common:

For

For though they reign only in hypocrites and other unsanctified ones, yet they dwell too much in all men on earth.

If you now ask me what these sinnes are: I answer, They are, as denominated from the Point or Term from which men turn, all compriſed in this one *Unwillingneſs of God, or the turning of the heart from God; or not loving God* But as we denominate them from the Term or Object to which they turn, they are all compriſed in this one, *Carnal ſelf-love,* or *turning to and preferring our carnal ſelf before God,* and as it inclineth to action, all or moſt of it is comprehended in this one word *Fleſh-pleaſing.* But becauſe there are a Trinity of ſinnes in this Unity, we muſt conſider them diſtinctly. Three great Objects there are about which this ſinne of *Fleſh-pleaſing* is exerciſed: 1. Credit or Honour. 2. Profit or Riches. 3. Senſual Pleaſure, more ſtrictly ſo called, conſiſting in the more immediate Pleaſing of the ſenſes; Whereas the two firſt do more remotely pleaſe them, by laying in Proviſion to that end: Otherwiſe all three are in the general but *Fleſh-pleaſing.* The three great ſinnes therefore that do moſt directly fight againſt

againſt God himſelf in his Sovereignty, are 1. Pride or Ambition. 2. Worldlines or Love of Riches. 3. Senſuality, Voluptuouſneſs, or inordinate Love of Pleaſures. There are in the *Underſtanding* indeed other ſinnes as directly againſt God as theſe, and more radicall (as 1. Atheiſm, denying a God. 2. Polutheiſm, denying our God to be the Alone God, and joyning others with him. 3. Idolatry, owning falſe Gods. 4. Infidelity, denying Jeſus Chriſt our Lord-Redeemer. 5. Owning falſe Saviours and Prophets, in his ſtead, or before him, as do the Mahometans. 6. Joyning other Redeemers and Saviours with him, as if he were not the alone Chriſt. 7. Denying the holy Ghoſt, and denying Credit to his Holy and Miraculous Teſtimony to the Chriſtian faith, and blaſphemouſly aſcribing all to the devil: which is the ſinne againſt the Holy Ghoſt. 8. Owning and believing in devils, or Lying ſpirits in ſtead of the Holy Ghoſt: as the Montaniſts, Mahometans, Ranters, Familiſts do. 9. Owning and adjoyning devils or Lying ſpirits in coordination or equality with the Holy Ghoſt, and believing equally his doctrine and theirs, as if he were not ſole and ſufficient in his Work. All theſe are ſinnes directly againſt God

himself, and if prevalent, most certainly damning; three against the Father, three against the Sonne, and three against the Holy Ghost. But these be not they that I need now to warn you of. These are prevalent only in Pagans, Infidels, and Blasphemers. Your troubles and complaints shew that these are not predominant in you. It is therefore the three forementioned sinnes of the Heart or Will that I would have you carefully to look after in your troubles, to see whether none of them get ground and strength in you.

1. Enquire carefully into your humility. It is not for nothing that Christ hath said so much of the excellency and necessity of this Grace; When he bids us learn of him to be meek and lowly: when he blesseth the meek and poor in spirit: when he setteth a little child in the midst of them, and telleth them, Except they become as that child they could not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: when he stoopeth to wash and wipe his Disciples feet, requiring them to do so, by one another. How oft doth the Holy Ghost press this upon us? Commanding us, to submit our selves to one another: and not to minde high things; but to condescend to men of low estate,

estate, *Rom.* 12.16. and not to be wise in our own esteem, but in honour preferre others before our selves, *Rom.* 12.10. How oft hath God professed to resist and take down the Proud, and to give Grace to the humble and dwell with them? Search carefully therefore lest this sinne get ground upon you. For though it may not be so predominant and reigning as to damn you, yet may it cause God to afflict you and hide his face from you, and humble you by the sense of his displeasure, and the concealment of his Love. And though one would think that doubting troubled souls should be alwaies the most humble, and freest from pride, yet sad experience hath certified me, that much pride may dwell with great doubtings and distress of minde. Even some of the same souls that cry out of their own unworthiness, and fear lest they shall be firebrands of Hell, yet cannot endure a close reproof, especially for any disgracefull sin, nor cannot bear a disparaging word, nor love those, nor speak well of them who do not value them, nor endure to be crost or contradicted in word or deed, but must have all go their way, and follow their judgement, and say as they say, and dance after their pipe, and their hearts rise against those that will not do it; much more against

those that speak or do any thing to the diminishing of their Reputation: They cannot endure to be low, and past by, and overlooked when others are preferred before them, or to be slighted and disrespected, or their words, or parts, or works, or judgements to be contemned or disparaged: Nay some are scarce able to live in the same House, or Church, or Town in love and peace with any but those that will humour and please them, and speak them fair, and give them smooth and stroaking language, and forbear crossing, reproving and disparaging them. Every one of these singly is an evident mark and fruit of pride; how much more all joyntly. I seriously profess it amazeth me to consider how hainously most professors are guilty of this sin! even when they know it to be the devils own sin, and the great abomination hated of God, and read and hear so much against it as they do, and confess it so oft in their praiers to God, and yet not only inwardly cherish it, but in words, actions, gestures, apparel, express it, and passionately defend these discoveries of it. The confusions and distractions in Church and State are nothing else but the proper fruits of it: so are the contentions among Christians, and the unpeaceableness in families: For *only from pride*

pride cometh contention, ſaith *Solomon*, Prov. 13.10. For my part when I conſider the great meaſure of pride, ſelf-conceitedneſs, ſelf-eſteem that is in the greateſt part of Chriſtians that ever I was acquainted with, (we of the Miniſtry not excepted) I wonder that God doth not afflict us more, and bring us down by foul means that will not be brought down by fair. For my own part I have had as great means to help me againſt this ſin, as moſt men living have had, firſt in many years trouble of minde, and then in near twenty years languiſhing and bodily pains, having been almoſt twenty times at the graves mouth, and living near it continually; and laſtly, and above all, I have had as full a ſight of it in others, even in the generality of Profeſſors, and in the dolefull ſtate of the Church and State, and haynous deteſtable abominations of this age', which one would think ſhould have fully cured it. And yet if I hear but either an applauding word from any of fame, on one ſide, or a diſparaging word on the other ſide, I am fain to watch my heart as narrowly as I would do the thatch of my houſe when fire is put to it, and preſently to throw on it the water of Deteſtation, Reſolution, and Recourſe to God: And though the acts through Gods great mercy

be thus restrained, yet the constancy of these inclinations assures me, that there is still a strong and deep root. I beseech you therefore, if you would ever have setled Peace and Comfort, be watchfull against this sinne of Pride, and be sure to keep it down, and get it mortified at the very heart.

2. The next sin that I would have you be specially jealous of is coveteousness, or love of the profits or riches of the world. This is not the sin of the rich only, but also of the poor: and more hainous is it in them to love the world inordinatly that have so little of it, then in rich men that have more to tempt them: though dangerous in both. Nor doth it lye only in coveting that which is anothers, or in seeking to get by unlawfull means; but also in over-valuing and over-loving the wealth of the world though lawfully gotten. He that loveth the world (that is, above Christ and holiness) the love of the Father is not in him (that is, savingly and sincerely) 1 Joh. 2. 15. He that loveth house or lands better then Christ cannot be his Disciple. I beseech you therefore when God hides his face, search diligently, and search again and again, least the world should encroach on Christs interest in your heart: If it should be so, can

you

you wonder if Christ seem to withdraw, when you begin to set so light by him, as to value dung and earth in any comparison with himself? May not he well say to you, *If you set so much by the world, take it, and see what it will do for you? If you can spare me better then your wealth, you shall be without me.* Must not the Lord Jesus needs take it exceeding unkindly, that after all his love and bloodshed and pains with your heart, and seals of his kindness, and discoveries of his Amiableness and the Treasures of his Kingdom, you should now so much forget and slight him, to set up the world in any comparison with him? and to give such loving entertainment to his enemy? and look so kindly on a competitor? Is his glory worth no more then so? and hath he deserved no better at your hands? Again therefore do I beseech you to be afraid, lest you should be guilty of this sin. Examine, whether the thoughts of the world grow not sweeter to you, and the thoughts of God and glory more unwelcome, and unpleasing? whether you have not an eagerness after a fuller estate, and too keen an edge upon your desires after riches? or at least, after a fuller portion and provision for your children? or after better accommodations and contentments in House,

Goods, or other worldly things? Do not worldly hopes delight you too much? and much more your worldly poſſeſſions? Are you not too buſily contriving how to be richer, forgetting Gods words, 1 *Tim.*6.8, 9,17. Doth not the world eat out the life of your duties, that when you ſhould be ſerious with God, you have left your heart behinde you, and drowned your affections in things below? Doth not your ſoul ſtick ſo faſt in this mud and clay, that you can ſcarce ſtirre it Godward in Prayer or heavenly Meditation? Do not you cut ſhort duties in your family and in ſecret, if not frequently omit them, that ſo you may be again at your worldly buſineſs? Or do you not cuſtomarily hurry them over becauſe the world will not allow you leaſure to be ſerious? and ſo you have no time to deal in good earneſt with Chriſt or your ſoul? Do not your very ſpeeches of Chriſt and heaven grow few and ſtrange, becauſe the world muſt firſt be ſerved? When you ſee your brother have need, do you not ſhut up the bowels of your compaſſions from him? Doth not the love of the world make you hard to your ſervants? hard to thoſe you buy and ſell with? And doth it not incroach much on the Lords own day? Look after this earthly vice in all theſe diſcoveries:

ries: ſearch for your enemy in each of theſe corners. And if you finde that this is indeed your caſe, you need not much wonder if Chriſt and you be ſtranger then heretofore. If this earth get between your heart and the Sun of Life, no wonder if all your Comforts are in an eclipſe; ſeeing your Light is but as the Moon's, a borrowed Light. And you muſt be the more carefull in ſearching after this ſinne, both becauſe it is certain that all men have too much of it, and becauſe it is of ſo dangerous a nature, that ſhould it prevail, it would deſtroy: For coveteouſneſs is Idolatry. And among all the hainous ſinnes that the godly have fallen into, look into the Scripture, and tell me how many of them you finde charged with coveteouſneſs? And alſo, becauſe it is a blinding befooling ſinne, not only drawing old men, and thoſe that have no children, and rich men, that have no need to purſue theſe things as madly as others; but alſo hiding it ſelf from their eyes, that moſt that are guilty of it will not know it: Though, alas, if they were but willing it were very eaſie to know it. But the power of the ſinne doth ſo ſet awork their wits to finde excuſes and fair names and titles for to cloak it, that many delude others by it, and more delude themſelves,

selves, but none can delude God. The case of some Professors of Godliness that I have known is very lamentable in this point: who being generally noted for a dangerous measure of worldliness, by most that know them, could yet never be brought to acknowledge it in themselves: Nay by the excellency of their outward duties and discourse, and the strength of their wits (alas, ill imployed) and by their great ability of speech, to put a fair gloss on the fouleſt of their actions, they have gone on so smoothly and plausibly in their worldliness, that though most accused them of it behinde their backs, yet no man knew how to fasten any thing on them. By which means they were hindered from repentance and recovery.

In this sad case, though it be Gods course very often to let hypocrites and other enemies go on and prosper, because they have their portion in this life, and the reckoning is to come; yet I have oft observed that for Gods own people, or those that he means to make his people by their recovery, God useth to cross them in their worldly desires and designes: Perhaps he may let them thrive a while, and congratulate the prosperity of their flesh, but at last he breaks in suddenly on their wealth, and scatters it abroad,

abroad, or addeth some crosse to it that imbitters it all to them, and then asketh them, *where is now your Idol?* and then they begin to see their folly. If you do dote on any thing below to the neglecting of God, he will make a rod for you of that very thing you dote upon; and by it will he scourge you home to himself.

3. The third great heart-sinne which I would have you jealous of, is Sensuality or Voluptuousnes, or pleasing the senses inordinately. The two former are in this the more mortall sinnes, in that they carry more of the Understanding and Will with them, and make Reason it self to be serviceable to them in their workings; whereas sensuality is more in the flesh and passion, and hath oft times less assistance of Reason or Consent of the Will. Yet is the Will tainted with sensual inclinations, and both Reason and Will are at the best guilty of connivence, and not exercising their authority over the sensual part. But in this sensuality is the more dangerous vice, in that it hath so strong and inseparable a seat as our sensual appetite; and in that it acteth so violently and ragingly as it doth; so that it beareth down a weak opposition of Reason and Will, and carrieth us on blindfold, and transformeth us into bruits. I will.

will not here put the Question concerning the gross acting of this sin (of that anon:) but I would have you very jealous of a sensual dispositon. When a man cannot deny his appetite what it would have; or at least, coveteousness can do more in restraining it, then conscience: When a man cannot make a Covenant with his eyes, but must gaze on every alluring object: When the flesh draws to forbidden pleasures, in meats, drinks, apparel, recreations, lasciviousness, and all the considerations of Reason cannot restrain it; this is a sad case: and God may well give over such to sadness of heart. If we walk so pleasingly to the flesh, God will walk more displeasingly to us.

And as you should be jealous of these great heart-transgressions, so should you be of particular actual sinnes. Examine whether the jealous eye of God see not something that much offendeth him and causeth your heaviness. I will not enlarge so farre as to minde you of the particular sinnes that you should look after, seeing it must be All, and your obedience must be universall. Only one I will give you a hint of. I have observed God sometimes shew himself most displeased and angry to these Christians, who have the least tenderness and compassion towards the infirmities of others.

others. He that hath made the forgiving others a neceſſary condition of Gods forgiving us, will ſurely withdraw the ſenſe of our forgiveneſs, when we withdraw our forgiveneſs and compaſſion to men. He that caſts the unmercifull ſervant into hell, who takes his fellow-ſervant by the throat, will threaten us and frown upon us if we come but neer it. *Bleſſed are the mercifull for they ſhall obtain mercy. He ſhall have judgement without mercy that ſheweth no mercy*, Jam. 2. 13. Study well *Rom.* 14. & 15. Chap. & *Gal.*6. which the proud, cenſorious, ſelf-eſteeming Profeſſors of this age have ſtudied ſo little, and will not underſtand. When we deal ſourly and churliſhly with our weak brethren, and in ſtead of winning an offendour by love, we will vilifie him, and diſdain him, and ſay, *How can ſuch a man have any Grace?* and will think and ſpeak hardly of thoſe that do but cheriſh any hopes that he may be gracious, or ſpeak of him with tenderneſs and compaſſion; no wonder if God force the conſciences of ſuch perſons to deal as churliſhly and ſourly with them, and to clamour againſt them, and ſay, *How canſt thou have any true grace, who haſt ſuch ſinnes as theſe?* When our Lord himſelf dealt alway ſo tenderly with ſinners, that it gave occaſion to the

slanderous Pharisees to say, He was *a friend of Publicans and sinners*: (and so he was; even their greatest friend.) And his command to us is, *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please our selves: Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: For even Christ pleased not himself*, Rom. 15.1,2,3. And *Gal.* 6.1,2. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one anothers burden, and so fulfill the Law of Christ.* When people can bear with almost no infirmity in a neighbour, in a servant, or in their neerest friends, but will make the worst of every fault, no wonder if God make such feel their dealings with others, by his dealings with them. Had such that Love to their poorest brethren, which thinketh no evil, and speaketh not evil, which suffereth long and is kinde, *envieth not, vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, behaveth not it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*, 1 Cor. 13.4,5,7. Had we more of this love which covereth a multitude of Infirmities; God would cover our Infirmities the more, and tell us of them,

them, and trouble us for them the less.

To this sinne I may adde another, which is scarce another, but partly the same with this, and partly its immediate effect; and that is, *Unpeaceableness and unquietness with those about us*; this commonly occasioneth God to make us as unpeaceable and unquiet in our selves. When people are so froward, and peevish, and troublesome, that few can live in peace with them, either in family or neighbourhood, except those that have little to do with them, or those that can humour them in all things, and have an extraordinary skill in smooth speaking, flattering or man-pleasing; so that neighbours, servants, children, and sometimes their own yoak-fellows, must be gone from them, and may not abide near them, as a man gets out of the way from a wild beast or a mad dog, or avoideth the flames of a raging fire; is it any wonder if God give these people as little peace in their own spirits, as they give to others. When people are so hard to be pleased that no body about them or near them can tell how to fit their humours; neighbours cannot please them, servants cannot please them, Husband or Wife cannot please each other; every word is spoke amiss, and every thing done amiss to them;

what

what wonder if God seem hard to be pleased, and as frequently offended with them? especially if their unpeaceableness trouble the Church, and in their turbulency and self-conceitedness, they break the peace thereof.

Thus I have told you what sinnes you must look after when you finde your peace broken, and your conscience disquieted; search carefully lest some iniquity lye at the root. Some I know will think that it is an unseasonable discourse to a troubled conscience, to minde them so much of their sinnes, which they are apt to look at too much already. But to such I answer, either those sinnes are mortified and forsaken; or not: If they be; then these are not the persons that I speak of, whose trouble is fed by continued sinne: but I shall speak more to them anon. If not; then it seems for all their trouble of conscience, sinne is not sufficiently laid to heart yet.

The chiefest thing therefore that I intend in all this discourse, is this following advice to those that upon search do finde themselves guilty in any of these cases. *As ever you would have peace of conscience, set your selves presently against your sinnes. And do not either mistakingly cry out of one*

one sore, when it is another that is your malady; nor yet spend your daies in fears and disquietness of minde, and fruitless complainings, and in the mean time continue in wilfull sinning: but resist sinne more, and torment your mindes less: and break off your sin and your terrours together.

In these words I tell you what must be done for your cure; and I warn you of two sore mistakes of many sad Christians hereabouts. The cure lieth in breaking off sinne, to the utmost of your power. This is the *Achan* that disquieteth all. It is Gods great mercy that he disquieteth you in sinning, and gives you not over to so deep a slumber and peace in sinne, as might hinder your repentance and reformation. The dangerous mistakes here are these two.

1. Some do as the Lapwing, cry loudest when they are furthest from the nest: and complain of an aking tooth, when the disease is in the head or heart. They cry out, *O I have such wandring thoughts in prayer, and such a bad memory, and so hard a heart that I cannot weep for sinne; or such doubts and fears, and so little sense of the Love of God, that I doubt I have no true Grace:* When they should rather say, *I have so prond a heart, that God is fain by these sad*

sad means to humble me: I am so high in my own eyes, so wise in my own conceit, and so tender of my own esteem and credit, that God is fain to make me base in my own eyes, and to abhorre my self. I am so worldly and in love with earth, that it draws away my thoughts from God, dulls my love, and spoils all my duties. I am so sensual that I venture sooner to displease my God then my flesh: I have so little compassion in the infirmities of neighbours and servants and other brethren, and deal so censoriously, churlishly and unmercifully with them, that God is fain to hide his mercy from me, and speak to me as in anger, and vex me as in sore displeasure. I am so froward, peevish, quarrelsome, unpeaceable and hard to be pleased, that it is no wonder if I have no peace with God, or in my own conscience; and if I have so little quietness who dow and seek it no more. Many have more reason, I say, to turn their complaints into this tune.

2. Another most common unhappy miscarriage of sad Christians lieth here, that *They will rather continue complaining and self-tormenting, then give over sinning, so farre as they might give it over if they would.* I beseech you in the Name of God to know and consider what it is that God requireth of you. He doth not de-

sire

fire your vexation but your reformation. No further doth he desire the trouble of your minde, then as it tendeth to the avoiding of that sinne which is the cause of it. God would have you less in your fears and troubles, and more in your obedience. Obey more, and disquiet your minde less. Will you take this counsel presently and see whether it will not do you more good, then all the complaints and doubtings of your whole life have done. Set your self with all your might against your pride, worldlines and sensuality, your unpeaceableness and want of love and tenderness to your brethren; and whatever other sin your conscience is acquainted with. I pray you tell me, If you had gravell in your shoe, in your travel, would it not be more wisdom, to sit down and take off your shoe, and cast it out, then to stand still or go complaining, and tell every one you meet of your soreness? If you have a thorn in your foot, will you go on halting and lamenting, or will you pull it out? Truly sinne is the thorn in your conscience: and those that would not have such troubled consciences told of their sinnes for fear of increasing their distress, are unskilfull comforters; and will continue the trouble while the thorn is in. As

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ever you would have peace then, reſolve againſt ſinne to the utmoſt of your power: Never excuſe it, or cheriſh it, or favour it more. Confeſs it freely. Thank thoſe that reprove you for it. Deſire thoſe about you to watch over you, and to tell you of it: yea to tell you of all ſuſpitious ſignes that they ſee of it, though it be not evident. And if you do not ſee ſo much Pride, Worldlineſs, Unpeaceableneſs or other ſinnes in your ſelf, as your friends think they ſee in you, yet let their judgement make you jealous of your heart; ſeeing ſelf-love doth oft ſo blinde us, that we cannot ſee that evil in our ſelves, which others ſee in us; nay which all the Town may take notice of. And be ſure to engage your friends that they ſhall not ſmooth over your faults, or mince them, and tell you of them in extenuating language, which may hinder Conviction and Repentance; much leſs ſilence them, for fear of diſpleaſing you: but that they will deal freely and faithfully with you. And ſee that you diſtaſt them not, and diſcountenance not their plain dealing, leſt you diſcourage them, and deprive your ſoul of ſo great a benefit. Think beſt of thoſe as your greateſt friends, who are leaſt friends to your ſinne, and do moſt for your recovery

very from it. If you ſay, *Alas, I am not able to mortifie my ſinnes: It is not in my power.* I anſwer, 1. I ſpeak not of a perfect conqueſt: nor of a freedom from every paſſion or infirmity. 2. Take heed of pretending diſability when it is unwillingneſs. If you were heartily willing you would be able to do much, and God would ſtrengthen you. Cannot you reſiſt Pride, Worldlineſs and Senſuality if you be willing? Cannot you forbear moſt of the actual ſinnes you commit, and perform the duties that you omit, if you be Willing? (though not ſo well as you would perform them?) Yea let me ſay this much, leſt I endanger you by ſparing you: Many a miſerable hypocrite doth live in trouble of minde and complaining, and after all periſh for their wilfull diſobedience. Did not the rich young man go farre before he would break off with Chriſt? and when he did leave him he went away ſorrowfull. And what was the cauſe of his ſorrow? Why the matter was, that he could not be ſaved without ſelling all and giving it to the poor, when he had great Poſſeſſions. It was not that he could not be rid of his ſinne: but that he could not have Chriſt and Heaven without forſaking the world. This is the caſe of unſanctified perſons that

are

are enlightened to see the need of Christ, but are not weaned from worldly profits, honours and pleasures; they are perhaps troubled in minde, (and I cannot blame them) but it is not that they cannot leave sinning, but that they cannot have Heaven without leaving their delights and contentments on earth. Sin as sin they would willingly leave: For no man can love evil as evil. But their fleshly profits, honours and pleasures they will not leave; and there is the stop: and this is the cause of their sorrows and fears. For their own judgement cries out against them, *He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him: If ye live after the flesh ye shall die. God resisteth the proud.* This is the voice of their informed understandings: And conscience seconds it and saith, *Thou art the man.* But the flesh cries louder then both these, *wilt thou leave thy pleasures? wilt thou undo thy self? wilt thou be made a scorn or laughing stock to all?* Or rather it strongly draws and provoketh, when it hath nothing to say: No wonder if this poor sinner be here in a strait, and live in distress of minde. But as long as the flesh holds so fast, that all this conviction and trouble will not cause it to lose its hold, the poor soul is still in the bonds of iniquity. The case of such an hypocrite or half-Christian

stian is like the case of the poor Papist, that having glutted himself with flesh in the Lent, was in this strait that either he must vomit it up, and so disclose his fault and undergo penance; or else he must be sick of his surfeit, and hazzard his life: But he resolveth rather to venture on the danger, then to bear the penance. Or their case is like that of a proud woman, that hath got on a strait garment, or a pinching shoe, and because she will not be out of the fashion, she will rather choose to bear the pain, though she halt or suffer at every step. Or like the more impudent sort of them, who will endure the cold, and perhaps hazzard their lives, by the nakedness of their necks and breasts and armes, rather then they will controul their shameless pride. What cure now should a wise man wish to such people as these? Surely, that the shoe might pinch yet a little harder, till the pain might force them to cast it off. And that they might catch some cold that would pay them for their folly (so it would but spare their lives) till it should force them to be ashamed of their pride, and cover their nakedness: Even so when disobedient hypocrites do complain that they are afraid they have no grace, and afraid God doth not pardon them, and will not save them, I should tell them, if I knew them,

them, that I am afraid so to; and that it is not without cause; and desire that their fears were such, as might affright them from their disobedience, and force them to cast away their wilfull sinning. I have said the more on this point, because I know if this advice do but help you to mortifie your sin, the best and greatest work is done, whether you get Assurance and comfort or no: and withall that it is the most probable means to this Assurance and Comfort.

I should next have warned you of the other extream, *viz.* needless scruples; but I mean to make that a peculiar Direction by it self, when I have first added a little more of this great means of Peace, *A sound Obedience*,

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DIRE-

DIRECTION XXIV.

24. *My next advice for the obtaining of a ſetled Peace and Comfort, is this:* [Take heed that you content not your ſelf with a cheap courſe of Religion, and ſuch a ſerving of God as coſteth you little or nothing: But in your abſtaining from ſin, in your riſing out of ſin, and in your diſcharge of Duty, incline moſt to that way which is moſt ſelf-denying, and diſpleaſing to the fleſh (ſo you be ſure it be a lawful way.) And when you are called out to any work which will ſtand you in extraordinary labour and coſt, you muſt be ſo far from ſhrinking and drawing your neck out of the yoke, that you muſt look upon it as a ſpecial prize that is put into your hand, & a ſingular advantage & opportunity for the *increaſe* of your *comforts*.

THIS Rule is like the reſt of the Chriſtian Doctrine, which is not throughly underſtood by any way but experience.

Libertines and ſenſual Profeſſors that never tryed it, did never well underſtand it. I could find in my heart to be large in explaining and applying it, but that I have been ſo large beyond my firſt intentions in the former Directions, that I will cut off the reſt as ſhort as I well can.

Let none be ſo wickedly injurious to me, as to ſay I ſpeak or think of any Merit, properly ſo called, in any the coſtlieſt work of man: Faſten not that on me which I both diſclaim, and deſire the Reader to take heed of. But I muſt tell you theſe two things:

1. That a cheap Religion is a far more uncertain evidence of ſincerity, then a dear. It will not diſcover ſo well to a mans own ſoul, whether he prefer Chriſt before the world, and whether he take him and his Benefits for his Portion and Treaſure.

2. That a cheap Religion is not uſually accompanied with any notable degree of Comforts, although the perſon be a ſincere-hearted Chriſtian.

Every Hypocrite can ſubmit to a Religion that will coſt him little: much more which will get Reputation with men of greateſt Wiſdom and Piety: Yea he may ſtick to it, ſo it will not undo him in the world. If a man have knowledge, and gifts of utterance, and ſtrength of body, it is no coſtly matter to

to ſpeak many good words, or to be earneſt in oppoſing the ſins of others, and to preach zealouſly and frequently (much more if he have double honour by it, Reverent Obedience, and Maintenance, as Miniſters of the Goſpel have, or ought to have.) It is hard to diſcern ſincerity in ſuch a courſe of Piety and Duty. Wo to thoſe Perſecutors that ſhall put us to the Trial, how far we can go in ſuffering for Chriſt: but it ſhould be a matter of Rejoycing to us, when we are put upon it. To be Patient in Tribulation is not enough: but to Rejoyce in it, is alſo the duty of a Saint. Let thoſe that think this draweth men to Rejoyce too much in themſelves, but hear what the Lord Jeſus himſelf ſaith, and his Spirit in his Apoſtles, *Mat.* 5 10, 11, 12. *Bleſſed are they which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſay all manner of evil ſayings againſt you falſly for my names ſake: Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven.*] *Iam.* 1. 2, 3, 12. *My Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations* (not inward temptations of the Devil and our Luſt, but trials by perſecution:) *knowing that the trying of your faith Worketh patience. Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he*

ſhall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him.] See *Luk.* 6. 23. 1 *Pet.* 4. 13. *Act.* 5. 41. 2 *Cor.* 6. 10. & 7. 4. *Col.* 1. 11. *Heb.* 10. 34. 2 *Cor.* 13. 9. & 12. 15. Oh how glorioufly doth a tried faith ſhine, to the comfort of the Believer, and the admiration of the Beholders? How eaſily may a Chriſtian try himſelf at ſuch a time when God is trying him? One hours experience, when we have found that our faith can endure the furnace, and that we can hazard or let go all for Chriſt, will more effectually reſolve all our doubtings of our ſincerity, then many a months trial by meer queſtioning of our own deceitful hearts.

Object. But (you may ſay) what if God call me not to ſuffering or hazards? muſt I caſt my ſelf upon it without a Call? or muſt I be therefore without Comfort?

Anſw. No; you ſhall not need to caſt your ſelf upon ſuffering; nor yet to be without Comfort for want of it. I know no man but may ſerve God at dearer rates to the fleſh then moſt of us do, without ſtepping out of the way of his duty: Nay he muſt do it, except he will avoyd his duty. Never had the Church yet ſuch times of proſperity, but that faithful duty would hazard men, and cauſe their trouble in the fleſh. Can you not, nay ought

ought you not to put your ſelf to greater labour for mens ſouls? If you ſhould but go day after day among the poor ignorant people where you live, and inſtruct them in the knowledge of God, and bear with all their weakneſs and rudeneſs, and continue thus with Patience; this might coſt you ſome labour, and perhaps contempt from many of the unthankful: and yet you ſhould not do more then your duty, if you have opportunity for it, as moſt have, or may have, if they will. If you ſhould further hire them to learn Catechiſms; if you ſhould extend your liberality to the utmoſt for relief of the poor, this would coſt you ſomewhat. If you carry on every Juſt Cauſe with Reſolution, though never ſo many great friends would draw you to betray it: this may coſt you the loſs of thoſe friends. If you will but deal plainly with the ungodly, and againſt all ſin, as far as you have opportunity, eſpecially if it be the ſins of Rulers and Gentlemen of name and power in the world; it may coſt you ſomewhat. Nay though you were Embaſſadors of Chriſt, whoſe office is to deal plainly, and not to pleaſe men in evil upon pain of Chriſts diſpleaſure; you may perhaps turn your great friends to be your great enemies. Go to ſuch a Lord, or ſuch a Knight, or ſuch a Gentleman, and tell him freely,

that God looketh for another manner of ſpending his time then in hunting and hawking, and ſporting and feaſting, and that this precious time muſt be dearly reckoned for: Tell him, that God looks he ſhould be the moſt eminent in Holineſs, and in a Heavenly life, and give an example thereof to all that are below him, as God hath made him more eminent in worldly dignity and poſſeſſions. Tell him, that where much is given, much is required; and that a low profeſſion, and dull approbation of that which is good, will ſerve no man, much leſs ſuch a man. Tell him, that his Riches muſt be expended to feed and cloath the poor, and promote good uſes, and not meerly for himſelf and family, or elſe he will make but a ſad account: and that he muſt freely engage his reputation, eſtate and life, and all for Chriſt and his Goſpel, when he cals him to it; yea and forſake all for him, if Chriſt put him to it, or elſe he can be no Diſciple of Chriſts: and then what good will his Honours and Riches do him, when his Soul ſhall be called for? Try this courſe with Great men, yea with Great men that ſeem religious, and that no further then faithfulneſs and compaſſion to mens ſouls doth bind you, and do it with all the wiſdom you can, that is not carnal; and then tell me what it doth coſt you. Let thoſe Miniſters that

that are near them, plainly and roundly tell both the Parliament-men, and Commanders of the Army, of their unquestionable transgressions, and that according to their nature, (and wo to them if they do not) and then let them tell me what it doth cost them. Alas Sirs, how great a number of Professors are base, daubing, self-seeking Hypocrites, that cull out the safe, the cheap, the easy part of duty, and leave all the rest! And so ordinarily is this done, that we have made us a new Christianity by it; and the Religion of Christs own making, the self-denying course prescribed by our Master, is almost unknown; and he that should practice it would be taken for a madman, or some self-conceited Cynick, or some saucy, if not seditious fellow. It is not therefore because Christ hath not prescribed us a more self-denying, hazardous, laborious way, that men so commonly take up in the Cheapest Religion: but it is through our false-heartedness to Christ, and the strength of sensual carnal Interests in us, which make us put false Interpretations on the plainest precepts of Christ which charge any unpleasing duty on us, and Familistically turn them into Allegories, or at least we will not yield to obey him. And, truly, I think that our shifting off Christ in this unworthy manner, and even altering that very frame

and nature of Christian Religion (by turning that into a flesh-pleasing Religion, which is more against the flesh then all the Religions else in the world) and dealing so reservedly, superficially and unfaithfully in all his work, is a great cause why Christ doth now appear no more openly for men, and pour out no larger a measure of his Spirit in Gifts and Consolations. When men appeared ordinarily in the most open manner for Christ, in greatest dangers and sufferings: then Christ appeared more openly and eminently for them (yet is none more for meekness, humility and love, and against unmerciful or dividing zeal, then Christ.)

2. And as you see that a cheap Religiousness doth not so discover sincerity: so secondly, it is not accompanied with that special blessing of God. As God hath engaged himself in his Word, that they shall not lose their Reward that give but a cup of water in his name: so he hath more fully engaged himself to those that are most deeply engaged for him; even that they that forsake all for him, shall have manifold recompence in this life, and in the world to come eternal life. Let the experience of all the world of Christians be produced, and all will attest the same truth, That it is Gods usual course to give men larger Comforts in dearer duties, then

then in cheap: Nay seldom doth he give large Comforts in cheap duties: and seldom doth he deny them in dearer, sobeit they are not made dear by our own sin and foolish indiscretion, but by his command; and our faithfulness in obeying him. Who knows not that the Consolation of Martyrs is usually above other mens, who hath read of their sufferings and strange sustentations? Christian, do but try this by thy own experiences, and tell me, when thou hast most resolutely followed Christ in a good Cause; when thou hast stood against the faces of the greatest for God; when thou hast cast thy life, thy family and estate upon Christ, and run thy self into the most apparent hazards for his sake: hast not thou come off with more inward peace and comfort, then the cheaper part of thy Religion hath afforded thee? When thou hast stood to the Truth and Gospel, and hast done Good through the greatest opposition, and lost thy greatest and dearest friends because thou wouldst not forsake Christ and his service, or deal falsly in some Cause that he hath trusted thee in: hast not thou come off with the blessing of Peace of Conscience? Nay, when thou hast denied thy most importunate Appetite, and most crossed thy lusts, and most humbled and abased thy self for God, and denied thy

credit, and taken ſhame to thy ſelf in a free confeſſing of thy faults, or patiently put up the greateſt abuſes, or humbled and tamed thy fleſh by neceſſary abſtinence, or any way moſt diſpleaſed it, by croſſing its intereſt, by bountiful giving, laborious duty, dangers or ſufferings for the ſake of the Lord Jeſus, his Truth and People: hath it not been far better with thee in thy Peace and Comforts then before? I know ſome will be ready to ſay, That may be from Carnal Pride in our own doing or ſuffering. I anſwer; It may be ſo: And therefore let all watch againſt that. But I am certain that this is Gods ordinary dealing with his people, and therefore we may ordinarily expect it: It is for their encouragement in faithful duty; and I may truly ſay, for their Reward, when himſelf cals that a Reward which he gives for a cup of water. Lay well to heart that Example of *Abraham* for which he is ſo often extolled in the Scripture, *viz.* his readineſs to ſacrifice his only Son: This was a dear Obedience: *And*, ſaith God, *Becauſe* (mark *Becauſe*) *thou haſt done this thing, in bleſſing I will bleſs thee, &c. David* would not offer to God that which coſt him nothing, 2 *Sam.* 24. 24. 1 *Chron.* 21. 24. God will have the beſt of your hearts, the beſt of your labours, the beſt of your eſtates, the beſt of all, or he will not accept it.

Abels

Abels sacrifice was of the best, and it was accepted: And God saith to *Cain*, *If thou do well, shalt not thou be accepted?*

Seeing this is so, let me advise you; Take it not for a calamity, but for a precious advantage, when God cals thee to a hazardous costly service, which is like to cost thee much of thy estate, to cost thee the loss of thy chiefest friends, the loss of thy credit, the indignation of Great ones, or the painfullest diligence and trouble of body: Shift it not off, but take this opportunity thankfully, lest thou never have such another for the clearing of thy sincerity, and the obtaining of more then ordinary Consolations from God: Thou hast now a Prize in thy hand for spiritual riches, if thou have but a heart to improve it. I know all this is a paradox to the unbelieving world: But here is the very excellency of the Christian Religion, and the Glory of Faith. It looks for its greatest spoyls, and richest prizes from its Conquests of fleshly Interests: It is not only able to do it, but it expecteth its advancement and consolations by this way. It is engaged in a war with the world and flesh; and in this war it plays not the vapouring fencer, that seems to do much, but never strikes home, as Hypocrites and carnal worldly Professors do: but he lays it home and spares not,

not, as one that knows, That the fleſhes ruine muſt be his Riſing, and the fleſhes thriving would be his Ruine. In theſe things the true Chriſtian alone is in good ſadneſs, and all the reſt of the world but in jeſt. The Lord pity poor deluded ſouls! You may ſee by this one thing, how rare a thing true Chriſtianity is among the Multitude that take themſelves for Chriſtians! and how certain therefore it is that few ſhall be ſaved! Even this one point of true Mortification, and ſelf-denial, is a ſtranger among the moſt of Profeſſors. Oh how ſad a teſtimony of it are the actions of theſe late times, wherein ſo much hath been done for ſelf, and ſafety, and carnal intereſts, and ſo little for Chriſt! yea, and that after the deepeſt engagements of Mercies and Vows that ever lay on a people in the world: Inſomuch that through the juſt judgement of God, they are now given up to doubt, whether it be the duty of Rulers to do any thing as Rulers for Chriſt, or no? or whether they ſhould not let Chriſt alone to do it himſelf? Well, this which is ſuch a myſterie to the unregenerate world, is a thing that every genuine Chriſtian is acquainted with: for they that are Chriſts have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts thereof; and the world is dead to them, and they to the world, *Gal.* 6. 11.

Take

Take this counsel therefore in all the several cases mentioned in the Direction:

1. In your preventing sin, and maintaining your Innocency, if you cannot do it without denying your credit, and exposing your self to disgrace; or without the loss of friends, or a breach in your estate, do it nevertheless: Yea, if it would cost you your utter ruine in the world, thank God that put such an opportunity into your hand for extraordinary Consolations: For ordinarily the Martyrs Comforts exceed other mens, as much as their burthen of duty and suffering doth. *Cyprian* is fain to write for the comfort of some Christians in his times, that at death were troubled that they mist of their hopes of Martyrdom. So also if you cannot mortifie any lust without much pinching the flesh, do it chearfully; for the dearer the victory costeth you, the sweeter will be the issue and review.

2. The same counsel I give you also in your rising from sin. It is the sad condition of those that yield to a Temptation, and once put their foot within the dores of Satan, that they ensnare themselves so, that they must undergo thrice as great difficulties to draw back, as they needed to have done beforehand for prevention and forbearance. Sin unhappily engageth the sinner to go on; and one

one ſin doth make another ſeem neceſſary. O how hard a thing is it for him that wrong'd another by ſtealing, deceit, over-reaching in bargaining, or the like, to confeſs his fault, and ask him forgiveneſs, and to the utmoſt of his ability to make reſtitution! What abundance of difficulties will be in the way? It will likely coſt him the loſs of his Credit, beſides the breach in his eſtate, and perhaps lay him open to the rage of him that he hath wronged. Rather he will be drawn to cover his ſin with a Lye, or at leaſt by Excuſes. And ſo it is in many other ſins. Now in any of theſe Caſes, when men indulge the fleſh, and cannot find in their hearts to take that loſs or ſhame to themſelves, which a through-Repentance doth require, they do but feed the troubles of their ſoul, and hide their wounds and ſores, and not eaſe them. Uſually ſuch perſons go on in a galled, unpeaceable condition, and reach not to ſolid Comfort: (I ſpeak only of thoſe to whom ſuch Confeſſion or Reſtitution is a duty.) And I cannot wonder at it: For they have great cauſe to queſtion the truth of that Repentance, and conſequently the ſoundneſs of that heart, which will not bring them to a ſelf-denying duty, nor to Gods way of riſing from their ſin. It ſeems at preſent the intereſt of the fleſh is actually predominant, when

when no Reaſon or Conviction will perſwade them to contradict it. As ever you would have ſound Comfort then in ſuch a Caſe as this, ſpare not the fleſh. When you have ſinned, you muſt riſe again or periſh. If you cannot riſe without faſting, without free confeſſing, without the utter ſhaming of your ſelves, without reſtitution; never ſtick at it. This is your hour of Trial: O yield not in the Conflict. The dearer the Victory coſteth you, the greater will be your Peace. Try it; and if you find it not ſo, I am miſtaken. Yet if you have ſinned ſo that the opening of it may more diſcredit the Goſpel, then your Confeſſion will honour it, and yet your Conſcience is unquiet, and urgeth you to confeſs; in ſuch a caſe be firſt well informed, and proceed warily and upon deliberation; and firſt open the caſe to ſome faithful Miniſter or able Chriſtian in ſecret, that you may have good advice.

3. The ſame counſel alſo would I give you in the performance of your duty. A Magiſtrate is convinced he muſt puniſh ſinners, and put down Ale-houſes, and be true to every Juſt Cauſe: but then he muſt ſteel his face againſt all mens reproaches, and the ſolicitations of all friends. A Miniſter is convinced that he muſt teach from houſe to houſe, as well as publickly, if he be able; and

that

that he must deal plainly with sinners according to their conditions; yea and require the Church to avoyd Communion with them, if they be obstinate in evill after other sufficient means: But then he shall lose the Love of his People, and be accounted Proud, Precise, Rigid, Lordly, and perhaps lose his maintenance. Obey God now; and the dearer it costeth you, the more Peace and Protection, and the larger blessing may you expect from God: For you do (as it were) oblige God the more to stick to you; as you will take your self obliged to own, and bear out, and reward those that hazard state, and credit, and life for you. And if you cannot obey God in such a Trial, it is a sad sign of a false-hearted Hypocrite: except your fall be only in a temptation, from which you rise with renewed Repentance and Resolutions, which will conquer for the time to come. As *Peter*, who being left to himself for an example of humane frailty, and that Christ might have no friend to stick by him when he suffered for our sin, yet presently wept bitterly, and afterward spent his strength and time in preaching Christ, and laid down his life in Martyrdom for him.

So perhaps many a poor servant, or hard labourer, hath scarce any time except the Lords day to Pray or Read. Let such pinch the

the flesh a little the more (so they do not overthrow their health) and either work the harder, or fare the harder, or be cloathed the more meanly, or especially break a little of their sleep, that they may find some time for these duties; and try whether the Peace and Comfort will not Recompence it. Never any man was a loser for God! So private Christians cannot conscionably discharge the great plain duty of Reproof and Exhortation; lovingly, yet plainly telling their friends and neighbours of their sins, and danger, and duty, but they will turn friends into foes, and possibly set all the Town on their heads. But is it a Duty, or is it not? If it be, then trust God with the Issue, and do your work, and see whether he will suffer you to be losers.

For my part I think, that if Christians took Gods work before them, and spared the flesh less, and trusted themselves and all to Christ alone, and did not balk all the troublesom costly part of Religion, and that which most crosseth the interest of the flesh; it would be more ordinary with them to be filled with the joys of the Holy Ghost, and walk in that Peace of Conscience which is a Continual Feast; and to have such full and frequent views both of the sincerity of their Evidencing Graces, and of Gods Reconciled

conciled Face, as would baniſh their doubts and fears, and be a greater help to their certainty of ſalvation, then much other labour doth prove. If you flinch not the fiery furnace, you ſhall have the company of the Son of God in it. If you flinch not the Priſon and Stocks, you may be able to ſing as *Paul* and *Silas* did. If you refuſe not to be ſtoned with *Stephen*, you may perhaps ſee Heaven opened as he did. If you think theſe Comforts ſo dear bought, that you will rather venture without them; let me tell you, you may take your courſe, but the end will convince you to the very heart, of the folly of your choyce. Never then complain for want of Comfort; remember you might have had it, and would not. And let me give you this with you: You will ſhortly find, though worldly Pleaſures, Riches and Honours were ſome ſlight ſalves to your moleſted Conſcience here, yet there will no cure nor eaſe for it be found hereafter: Your merry hours will then all be gone, and your worldly Delights forſake you in Diſtreſs: but theſe ſolid Comforts which you judged too dear, would have ended in the Everlaſting Joys of Glory. When men do flinch God and his Truth in ſtraits, and juggle with their Conſciences, and will take out all the honourable, eaſy, cheap part of the work of Chriſt, and make a

Religion

Religion of that by it ſelf, leaving out all the diſgraceful, difficult, chargeable, ſelf-denying part; and hereupon call themſelves Chriſtians, and make a great ſhew in the world with this kind of Religiouſneſs, and take themſelves injured if men queſtion their honeſty and uprightneſs in the faith: theſe men are notorious ſelf-deceivers, meer Hypocrites; and in plain truth, this is the very true deſcription by which damnable Hypocrites are known from ſound Chriſtians. The Lord open mens eyes to ſee it in time while it may be cured. Yea, and the nearer any true Chriſtian doth come to this ſin, the more doth he diſ-oblige God, and quench the Spirit of Comfort, and darken his own Evidences, and deſtroy his Peace of Conſcience, and create unavoydable Troubles to his Spirit, and eſtrangedneſs betwixt the Lord Jeſus and his own ſoul. Avoyd this therefore, if ever you will have Peace.

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DIRECTION XXV.

25. *My next Advice shall be somewhat near of kin to the former. If you would learn the most expeditious way to Peace and setled Comfort*, [Study well the Art of Doing Good: & let it be your every-days contrivance, care and business, how you may lay out all that God hath trusted you with, to the greatest pleasing of God, and to your most comfortable account.]

STill remember (lest any Antinomian should tell you that this savours of Popery, and trusting for Peace to our own Works.)

1. That you must not think of giving any of Christs honour or office to your best works. You must not dream that they can do any thing to the satisfaction of Gods Justice for your sins: nor that they have any proper Merit in them, so as for their worth to oblige God to Reward you: nor that you must bring them as a Price to purchase Christ and Heaven:

Heaven: nor that you have any Righteousneſs or Worthineſs in your ſelf and Works, which the Law of Works will ſo denominate or own. But onely you muſt give Obedience its due under Chriſt; and ſo you honour Chriſt himſelf, when thoſe that detract from Obedience to him, do diſhonour him: and you muſt have an Evangelical *Worthineſs and Righteouſneſs* (ſo called many and many times over in the Goſpel) which partly conſiſteth in the ſincerity of your Obedience and Good Works; as the condition of continuing your ſtate of Juſtification, and right to eternal Life.

2. Remember I have given you many Arguments before, to prove that you may take Comfort from your Good Works, and Gracious Actions.

3. If any further Objections ſhould be made againſt this, read conſiderately and believingly *Math.* 25. and *Math.* 5 and 7. Chapters throughout, or the former onely; and I doubt not but you will be fully reſolved. But to the work.

Thoſe men that ſtudy no other Obedience then onely to do no (poſitive) harm, are ſo far from true Comfort, that they have yet no true Chriſtianity; I mean, ſuch as will be ſaving to them. *Doing Good* is a high part of a Chriſtians obedience, and muſt be the chief part

part of his life. The Heathen could tell him that askt him, How men might be like to God? That one way was, *To do good to all.* This is beyond our power, being proper to God the Universal Good, whose Mercy is over all his Works. But our Goodness must be Communicative, if we will be like God, and it must be extended and diffused as far as we can. The Apostles charge is plain, and we must obey it if we will have Peace. *Gal.* 6. 10. *While you have time, Do good to all men, but especially to them of the household of faith.* Isa. 1. 16, 17. *Cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the Widow: Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as wool.*] Heb. 13. 16. *To Do Good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*] 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that be rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they Do Good, that they be rich in Good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*] See *Luk.* 6. 33, 34, 35. *Mar.* 14. 7. *Matth.*

Math. 5. 44. 1 *Pet.* 3. 11. *Jam.* 4. 17. *Psal.* 34. 14. *&* 37. 27. *&* 36. 3. *&* 37. 3. *Trust in the Lord, and Do Good.*] Gen. 4. 7. *If thou Do Well, shalt thou not be Accepted? but if thou do Evil, sin lieth at the dore.*] Act. 10. 3, 4. 34, 35. *Cornelius, thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before God.*] 35. [*In every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is Accepted of him.*] Rom. 6. 16. *Know ye not that to whom ye yield your selves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey? whether of sin unto death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness?*] 13. *Yield your selves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God.*] Mat. 5. 16. Act. 9. 36. Eph. 2. 10. *We are created in Christ Jesus to Good VVorks, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them.*] 1 Tim. 2. 10. *&* 5. 10. *&* 5. 25. 2 *Tim.* 3. 17. *Tit.* 2. 7. *&* 3. 8. 14. *&* 2. 14. *He redeemed us from all iniquity, that he might purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of Good VVorks.*] 1 *Pet.* 2. 12. *Heb.* 10. 24. *Let us consider one another, to Provoke to Love and to Good VVorks.*] What a multitude of such passages may you find in Scripture?

You see then how great a part of your Calling and Religion consisteth in *Doing Good.* Now it is not enough to make this your

your care now and then, or do Good when it fals in your way: but you must *study* it, or it will not be well done. You must study which are Good Works; and which are they that you are called to: and which are the best Works, and to be preferred, that you choose not a less instead of a greater. *God looks to be served with the best.* You must study for *opportunities* of Doing Good, and of the means of succeeding and accomplishing it; and for the removing of Impediments; and for the overcoming of disswasives, and withdrawing Temptations. You must know what Talents God hath entrusted you with, and those you must study to do Good with. Whether it be Time, or Interest in men, or opportunity, or Riches, or Credit, or Authority, or Gifts of mind, or of body: If you have not one, you have another, and some have all.

This therefore is the thing that I would perswade you to: Take your self for Gods Steward: Remember the time when it will be said to you [*Give account of thy Stewardship; thou shalt be no longer Steward*] Let it be your every-days contrivance, how to lay out your Gifts, Time, Strength, Riches or Interest, to your Masters use. Think which way you may do most, first, to Promote the Gospel, and the Publique Good of the

the Church: and then, which way you may help towards the saving of particular mens souls; and then which way you may better the Commonwealth; and how you may do good to mens bodies; beginning with your own, and those of your family, but extending your help as much further as you are able. Ask your self every morning, Which way may I this day most further my Masters business, and the Good of men? Ask your self every night, What Good have I done to day? And labour as much as may be, to be Instruments of some great and standing Good, and of some Publick and Universal Good; that you may look behind you at the years end, and at your lives end, and see the Good that you have done. A piece of bread is soon eaten, and a peny or a shilling is soon spent: But if you could win a Soul to God from sin, that would be a visible everlasting Good: If you could be Instruments of setting up a Godly Minister in a Congregation that want, the everlasting Good of many Souls might in part be ascribed to you: If you could help to heal and unite a Divided Church, you might more rejoyce to look back on the fruits of your labour, then any Physician may Rejoyce to see his poor Patient recovered to health. I have told Rich men in another Book, what opportunities

they have to do Good if they had hearts: How easy were it with them to refresh mens bodies, and to do very much for the saving of souls! To relieve the poor; to set their Children to trades; to ease the oppressed. How easy to maintain two or three poor Scholars at the Universities for the service of the Church? But I hear but of few that do ever the more in it, except three or four of my friends in these parts. Let me further tell you, God doth not leave it to them as an indifferent thing. (*Math.* 25. They must feed Christ in the poor, or else starve in Hell themselves: They must cloath naked Christ in the poor, or be laid naked to his fiery indignation for ever. How much more diligently then must they help mens souls, and the Church of Christ, as the need is greater, and the work better? Oh the blinding power of Riches! O the easiness of mans heart to be deluded! Do Rich men never think to lie rotting in the dust? do they never think that they must be accountable for all their Riches? and for all their Time, and Power, and Interests? Do they not know that it will comfort them more at Death & Judgement, to hear in their reckoning, *Item* so much given to such & such Poor? so much to promote the Gospel? so much to maintain poor Scholars while they study to prepare themselves for the Ministry? &c.

&c. then to hear, so much in such a Feast? to entertain such Gallants? to please such Noble friends? so much at dice, at cards, at horse-races, at cock-fights? so much in excess of Apparel? and the rest to leave my Posterity in the like pomp? Do they not know that it will comfort them more to hear then of their time spent in Reading Scripture, secret and open Prayer, Instructing and examining their Children and Servants; going to their poor Neighbours houses to see what they want, and to perswade them to godliness; and in being examples of eminent holiness to all; and in suppressing Vice, and doing Justice; then to hear of so much time spent in Vain Recreations, Visits, Luxuries and Idleness? O deep Unbelief and hardness of heart, that makes Gentlemen that they tremble not to think of this Reckoning! Well, let me tell both them and all men, that if they knew but either that undispensable duty of Doing Good, that lieth on them, or how necessary and sure a way (in subordination to Christ) this act of Doing Good is for the souls Peace and consolation, they would study it better, and practice it more faithfully then now they do: They would then be glad of an opportunity to do Good, for their own Gain, as well as for Gods honour, and for the love of Good it self. They would know that lending

to the Lord is the onely thriving Usury; and that no part of all their Time, Riches, Interest in men, Power or Honours will be then comfortable to them, but that which was laid out for God; And they will one day find, that God will not take up with the scraps of their Time and Riches which their flesh can spare; but he will be first served, even before all comers, and that with the best, or he will take them for no servants of his. This is true, and you'l find it so, whether you will now believe it or no.

And because it is possible these lines may fall into the hands of some of the Rulers of this Commonwealth, let me here mind them of two weighty things.

1. What opportunities of Doing very great Good hath been long in their hands? and how great an account of it they have to make. It hath been long in their power to have done much to the Reconciling of our Differences, and healing our Divisions, by setting Divines a work of different Judgements to find out a temperament for Accommodation. It hath long been in their power to have done much towards the supply of all the dark Congregations in *England* and *Wales*, with competently able, sound and faithful Teachers! We have many Congregations that do contain three thousand, five thousand,

thousand, or ten thousand souls, that have but one or two Ministers, that cannot possibly do the tenth part of the Ministerial work of Private oversight; and so poor souls must be neglected, let Ministers be never so able or painful. We have divers Godly Private Christians of so much understanding as to be capable of helping us as Officers in our Churches: but they are all so poor that they are not able to spare one hour in a day or two from their labour, much less to give up themselves to the work: How many a Congregation is in the same Case? Nothing almost is wanting to us to have set our Congregations in the order of Christ, and done this great work of Reformation which there is so much talking of, so much as want of Maintenance for a Competent Number of Ministers or Elders to attend the work. I am sure in great Congregations this is the Case, and a sore that no other means will remedy. Was it never in the power of our Rulers to have helpt us here? Was nothing sold for other uses, that was once Devoted and Dedicated to God, and might have helpt us in this our miserable distress? Were our Churches able to maintain their own Officers, our Case were more tolerable: but when a Congregation that wants six, or seven, or ten, is not able to maintain one, it is hard.

2. The second thing that I would mind our Rulers of, is, What mortal Enemies those men are to their souls, that would perswade them that they must not, as Rulers, Do Good to the souls of men, and to the Church as such; nor further the Reformation, nor propagate the Gospel, nor stablish Christs orders in the Churches of their Country, any otherwise then by a common maintaining the Peace and Liberties of all. What doctrine could more desperately undo you if entertained? If you be once perswaded that it belongs not to you to *Do Good*, and the Greatest Good, to which all your successes have but made way, then all the Comfort, the Blessing and Reward is lost: And consequently all the Glorious preparative successes, as to you, are lost: If once you take your selves to have nothing to do as Rulers for Christ, you cannot promise your selves that Christ will have any thing to do for you as Rulers in a way of Mercy: This Mr. *Owen* hath lately told you in his Sermon, *Oct.* 13. *The God of Heaven forbid, that ever all the Devils in Hell, the Jesuits at Rome, or the seduced souls in England, should be able to perswade the Rulers of this Land, who are so deeply bound to God by Vows, Mercies, Professions, and high expences of treasure and blood, to Reform his Church, and propagate his Gospel; that now*

now after all this it belongeth not to them, but they must as Rulers be no more for Christ then for Mahomet: But if ever it should prove the sad case of England to have such Rulers (which I strongly hope will never be) if my Prognostick fail not, this will be their fate: The Lord Jesus will forsake them, as they have forsaken him, & the Prayers of his Saints will be fully turned against them; and his Elect shall cry to him night and day, till he avenge them speedily, by making these his enemies to lick the dust, and dashing them in pieces like a Potters vessel, because they would not that he should reign over them: And then they shall know whether Christ be not King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Perhaps you may think I Digress from the matter in hand: But as long as I speak but for my Lord Christ, and for *Doing Good*, I cannot think that I am quite out of my way. But to return nearer to those for whose sakes I chiefly write: This is that sum of my advice: Study with all the understanding you have, how to do as much Good while you have time as possibly you can, and you shall find that (without any Popish or Pharisaical self-confidence) to be the most excellent art for obtaining spiritual Peace, and a large measure of comfort from Christ.

To that end use seriously and daily to be-

think your self, What way of expending your Time and Wealth, and all your Talents, will be most comfortable for you to hear of, and review at Judgement? and take that as the way most comfortable now. Onely consult not with flesh and blood: make not your flesh of your counsel in this work: but take it for your enemy: expect its violent unwearied opposition: But regard not any of its clamours or repinings: But know, as I said before, that your truest spiritual comforts are a Prize that must be won upon the conquest of the flesh. I will only add to this the words of Blessed Dr. *Sibs* (a man that was no enemy to Free Grace, nor unjust Patron of mans Works) in his Preface to his *Souls Conflict*; *Christ is first a King of Righteousness, and then of Peace: The Righteousness that he works by his Spirit brings a Peace of sanctification: whereby though we are not freed from sin, yet we are enabled to combat with it, and to get the victory over it. Some Degree of Comfort follows every Good Action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influences issue from the Sun: Which is so true, that very Heathens upon the discharge of a good Conscience, have found Comfort and Peace answerable: this is a Reward before our Reward* Again, *In Watchfulness and diligence we sooner meet with Comfort then in idle Complaining.* Again,

Pag.

Pag. 44, 45. *An unimployed life is a burthen to it self. God is a pure act: always Working: always Doing: and the nearer our soul comes to God, the more it is in action, and the freer from disquiet. Men experimentally feel that Comfort in Doing that which belongs unto them, which before they longed for and went without.* And in his Preface to the *Bruised Reed*; *There is no more Comfort to be expected from Christ then there is Care to Please him. Otherwise to make him an Abetter of a lawless and a lobse life, is to transform him into a phancy; nay into the likeness of him whose works he came to destroy, which is the most detestable Idolatry of all. One way whereby the Spirit of Christ prevaileth in his, is to preserve them from such thoughts: Yet we see, People will frame a Divinity to themselves, pleasing to the flesh, sutable to their own ends, which being vain in the substance, will prove likewise vain in the fruit, and a building upon the sands.* So far Dr. *Sibs*. It seems there were Libertines and Antinomians then: and will be as long as there are any carnal unsanctified Professors.

DIRECTION XXVI.

26. Having led you thus far towards a setled Peace, my next Direction shall contain a Necessary Caution, lest you run as far into the contrary extreme, *viz. Take heed that you neither trouble your own soul with needless scruples; about matters of doctrine, of duty, or of sin, or about your own Condition: Nor yet that you do not make your self more work then God hath made you, by feigning things unlawful which God hath not forbidden, or by placing your Religion in Will-worship, or in an over-curious insisting on Circumstantials, or an over-rigorous dealing with your Body.*

THis is but the Exposition of *Solomons*, *Be not Over-wise, and be not Righteous overmuch*, Eccl. 7. 16. A man cannot serve God too much; formally and strictly considering his service: much less Love him too much. But we may do too much Materially in-

intending thereby to ſerve God; which though it be not true Righteouſneſs, yet being Intended for Righteouſneſs, and done as a ſervice of God, or Obedience to him, is here called Over-much-Righteouſneſs. I know it is ſtark madneſs in the prophane ſecure World to think that the doing of no more then God hath commanded us, is Doing too much, or More then needs; as if God had bid us do more then needs, or had made ſuch Laws as few of the fooliſh Rulers on earth would make: This is plainly to Blaſpheme the Moſt High, by denying his Wiſdom and his Goodneſs, and his Juſt Government of the World: and to Blaſpheme his holy Laws, as if they were too ſtrict, preciſe, and made us more to do then needs: and to reproach his ſweet and holy ways, as if they were grievous, intolerable and unneceſſary. Much more is their Madneſs, in charging the Godly with being too Pure, and too Preciſe, and making too great a ſtir for Heaven, and that meerly for their Godlineſs and Obedience, when, alas, the beſt do fall ſo far ſhort of what Gods Word and the neceſſity of their own ſouls do require, that their Conſciences do more grievouſly accuſe them of Negligence, then the barking World doth of being too preciſe and diligent: And yet more mad are the World, to lay out ſo much Time,

and

and Care, and Labour for Earthly Vanities, and to provide for their contemptible bodies for a little while, and in the mean time to think that Heaven and their Everlasting Happiness there, and the escaping of everlasting damnation in Hell, are Matters not worth so much ado, but may be had with a few cold wishes, and that its but folly to do so much for it as the Godly do: That no labour should be thought too much for the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and every little is enough for God. And that these wretched souls are so blinded by their own lusts, and so bewitched by the Devil into an utter Ignorance of their own hearts, that they verily think, and will stand in it, that for all this They Love God above all, and love Heavenly things better then Earthly, and therefore shall be saved.

But yet Extremes there are in the service of God, which all wise Christians must labour to avoyd. It is a very great Question among Divines, Whether the common rule in Ethicks, *That Virtue is ever in the middle between two extremes*, be sound, as to Christian Virtues: *Amesius* saith, No. The Case is not very hard, I think, to be resolved, if you will but use these three Distinctions. 1. Between the Acts of the meer Rational faculties, Understanding and Will, called, Elicite Acts;

Acts; and the Acts of the Inferiour faculties of soul and body, called, Imperate Acts. 2. Between the Acts that are About the End immediatly, and those that are About the Means. 3. Between the Intension of an Act, and the Objective Extension, and Comparison of Object with Object. And so I say: 1. The End (that is, God and Salvation) cannot be too fully Known, or too much Loved, with a pure Rational Love of Complacency, nor too much sought by the Acts of the soul as purely Rational: For the End being loved and sought for it self, and being of Infinite Goodness, must be loved and sought without Measure or Limitation, it being Impossible here to exceed. *Prop.* 2. The Means, while they are not mis-apprehended, but taken as Means, and Materially well understood, cannot be too clearly discerned, nor too Rightly chosen, nor too Resolutely prosecuted. *Prop.* 3. It is too possible to mis-apprehend the Means, and to place them instead of the End, and so to Over-love them. *Prop.* 4. The Nature of all the Means consisteth in a Middle or Mean betwixt two Extreams, materially: both which Extreams are sin: so that it is possible to over-do about all the Means, as to the Matter of them, and the Extent of our acts. Though we cannot Love God too much,

much, yet it is possible to Preach, Hear, Pray, Read, Meditate, Confer of Good too much: For one Duty may shut out another; and a greater may be neglected by our overdoing in a lesser: which was the Pharisees sin in Sabbath-Resting. 5. If we be never so right in the extension of our Acts, yet we may go too far in the Intension of the Imperate Acts or Passions of the soul, and that both on the Means and End: Though the pure Acts of Knowing or Willing cannot be too great towards God and Salvation, yet the Passions and Acts commonly called Sensitive, may. A man may Think on God not onely too much (as to exclude other necessary thoughts) but too Intensly: and Love and Desire too Passionately: For there is a Degree of Thinking or Meditating, and of Passionate Love and Desire, which the brain cannot bear, but it will cause Madness, and quite overthrow the use of Reason, by overstretching the organs, or by the extreme turbulency of the agitated spirits. Yet I never knew the man, nor ever shall do I think, that was ever guilty of one of these excesses, that is, of Loving or Desiring God so Passionately as to distract him: But I have often known weak-headed people (that be not able to order their thoughts) and many Melancholy People, Guilty of the other; that is, of thinking

thinking too much and too seriously and intensly on Good and Holy things, whereby they have overthrown their Reason and been distracted. And here I would give all such weak-headed Melancholy persons this warning, That whereas in my Book of Rest, I so much press a constant course of Heavenly Meditation, I do intend it onely for sound heads, and not for the Melancholy that have weak heads, and are unable to bear it. That may be their sin, which to others is a very great duty. While they think to do that which they cannot do, they will but disable themselves for that which they can do. I would therefore advise those Melancholy persons whose minds are so troubled, and heads weakned, that they are in danger of overthrowing their Understandings (which usually begins in multitudes of scruples, and restlesness of mind, and continual fears, and blasphemous temptations: where it begins with these, distraction is at hand, if not prevented) that they forbear Meditation, as being no duty to them, though it be to others; and instead of it be the more in those duties which they are fit for: especially Conference with Judicious Christians, and Chearful and Thankful acknowledgement of Gods Mercies. And thus have I shewed you, how far we may possibly exceed in Gods service: Let me now a little apply it.

It

It hath ever been the Devils Policy to begin in perswading men to Worldlyness, Fleshpleasing, Security and Presumption, and utter Neglect of God and their souls, or at least preferring their bodies and worldly things: and by this means he destroyeth the world. But where this will not take, but God awaketh men effectually, and casteth out the sleepy Devil, usually he fils mens heads with needless scruples, and next setteth them on a Religion not commanded, and would make poor souls believe they do Nothing, if they do not more then God hath commanded them. When the Devil hath no other way left to destroy Religion and Godliness, he will pretend to be Religious and Godly himself: and then he is always over-religious and over-godly in his Materials. *All overdoing in Gods Work is undoing.* And who ever you meet with that would Over-do, suspect him to be either a subtil destroying enemy, or one deluded by the destroyer. O what a Tragedy could I here shew you of the Devils acting! and what a Mysterie in the Hellish Art of Deceiving could I open to you! And shall I keep the Devils counsel? No. O that God would open the eyes of his poor desolate Churches at last to see it!

The Lord Jesus in Wisdom and tender Mercy, establisheth a Law of Grace, and Rule of

of Life, Pure and Perfect, but ſimple and plain; laying the Condition of mans ſalvation more in the Honeſty of the Believing Heart, then in the ſtrength of Wit, and ſubtilty of a Knowing Head. He comprized the Truths which were of Neceſſity to ſalvation in a Narrow room: So that the Chriſtian Faith was a matter of great plainneſs and ſimplicity. As long as Chriſtians were ſuch, and held to this, the Goſpel rode in Triumph through the world, and an Omnipotency of the Spirit accompanied it, bearing down all before it. Princes and Scepters ſtoopt: ſubtil Philoſophy was non-pluſt; and all uſeful Sciences came down, and acknowledged themſelves Servants, and took their places, and were well contented to attend the pleaſure of Chriſt; As Mr. *Herbert* ſaith in his *Church Militant*:

Religion thence fled into Greece, *where Arts*
Gave her the higheſt place in all mens hearts:
Learning was poſ'd: Philoſophy was ſet;
Sophiſters taken in a Fiſhers Net.
Plato *and* Ariſtotle *were at a loſs,*
And wheel'd about again to ſpell Chriſts Croſs.
Prayers chas't Syllogiſms into their den,
And Ergo *was transform'd into* Amen.

The Serpent envying this Happineſs of the

the Church, hath no way to undo us, but by drawing us from our Christian simplicity. By the occasion of Hereticks quarrels and errours, the Serpent steps in, and will needs be a spirit of Zeal in the Church; and he will so Over-do against Hereticks, that he perswades them, they must enlarge their Creed, and adde this Clause against one, and that against another, and all was but for the perfecting and preserving of the Christian Faith: And so he brings it to be a Matter of so much Wit to be a Chrjstian (as *Erasmus* complains) that ordinary heads were not able to reach it. He had got them with a Religious zealous Cruelty to their own and others souls, to lay all their Salvation, and the Peace of the Church upon some unsearchable mysteries about the Trinity, which God either never revealed, or never clearly revealed, or never laid so great a stress upon: Yet he perswades them, that there was Scripture-proof enough for these: Onely the Scripture spoke it but in the premises, or in darker terms, and they must but gather into their Creed the Consequences, and put it into plainer expressions which Hereticks might not so easily corrupt, pervert or evade. Was not this Reverend Zeal? and was not the Devil seemingly now a Christian of the most judicious and forward sort? But what got he at this one

one game? 1. He neceſſitated Implicit Faith even in Fundamentals, when he had got points beyond a vulgar reach among Fundamentals. 2. He neceſſitated ſome living Judge for the Determining of Fundamentals *quoad nos*, though not *in ſe* (the Soul of Popiſh wickedneſs) that is, what it is in ſenſe that the People muſt take for Fundamentals. 3. He got a ſtanding Verdict againſt the perfection and ſufficiency of Scripture (and conſequently againſt Chriſt, his Spirit, his Apoſtles, and the Chriſtian Faith:) That it will not afford us ſo much as a Creed or Syſteme of Fundamentals, or Points abſolutely Neceſſary to Salvation and Brotherly Communion, in fit or tolerable phraſes; but we muſt mend the language at leaſt. 4. He opened a gap for humane Additions, at which he might afterwards bring in more at his pleaſure. 5. He framed an Engine for an Infallible Diviſion, and to tear in Pieces the Church, Caſting out all as Hereticks that could not ſubſcribe to his Additions, and neceſſitating ſeparation by all diſſenters, to the Worlds End, till the Devils engine be overthrown. 6. And hereby he lays a ground upon the Diviſions of Chriſtians, to bring men into doubt of all Religion, as not knowing which is the right. 7. And he lays the ground of certain heart-burnings, and mutual

tual Hatred, Contentions, Revilings, and Enmity. Is not here enough got at one Caſt? Doth there need any more to the eſtabliſhing of the Romiſh and Helliſh darkneſs? Did not this one act found the Seat of *Rome*? Did not the Devil get more in his Gown in a day, then he could get by his Sword in three hundred years? And yet the Holy Ghoſt gave them full warning of this before-hand. 2 *Cor.* 11. 2, 3. *For I am jealous over you with a godly jealouſy; for I have eſpouſed you to one Husband, that I may preſent you as a chaſt Virgin to Chriſt. But I fear leſt by any means, as the Serpent beguiled* Eve *through his ſubtilty, ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt.* Rom. 14. 1. *Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye: but not to Doubtful Diſputations.* Pſal. 19. *The Law of the Lord is perfect.* 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. *All Scripture is given by Inſpiration from God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs, that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all Good Works.* Iſa. 8. 20. *To the Law and to the Teſtimony: if they ſpeak not according to theſe, it is becauſe there is no truth in them.* With many the like.

This plot the Serpent hath found ſo ſucceſsful, that he hath followed it on to this day.

day. He hath made it the great Engine to get *Rome* on his ſide, and to make them the great Dividers of Chriſts Church: He made the Pope and the Councel of *Trent* believe, that when they had owned the antient Creed of the Church, they muſt put in as many and more additional Articles of their own, and Anathematize all gainſayers: and theſe Additions muſt be the peculiar Mark of their Church, as Romiſh: and then all that are not of that Church, that is, that own not thoſe ſuper-added Points, are not of the true Church of Chriſt, if they muſt be Judges. Yea among our ſelves hath the Devil uſed ſucceſsfully this plot: What Confeſſion of the pureſt Church hath not ſome more then is in Scripture? The moſt modeſt muſt mend the phraſe, and ſpeak plainer, and ſomewhat of their own in it; not excepting our own moſt reformed Confeſſion.

Yea and where Modeſty reſtrains men from putting all ſuch inventions and explications in their Creed, the Devil perſwades men that they being the Judgements of Godly Reverend Divines (no doubt to be Reverenced, valued and heard) it is almoſt as much as if it were in the Creed, and therefore whoever diſſenteth muſt be noted with a black coal, and you muſt diſgrace him, and avoyd Communion with him as an Heretick. Hence lately

lately is your Union, Communion and the Churches Peace laid upon certain unsearchable Mysteries about Predestination, the order and objects of Gods Decrees, the manner of the Spirits secretest operations on the soul, the Nature of the Wils essential Liberty, and its power of self-determining the Divine concourse, determination or predestination of mans and all other Creatures actions, &c. that he is scarcely to be accounted a fit member for our fraternal Communion that differs from us herein. Had it not been for this one Plot, the Christian Faith had been kept pure; Religion had been one; the Church had been one; and the hearts of Christians had been more one then they are. Had not the Devil turn'd Orthodox, he had not made so many true Christians Hereticks, as *Epiphanius* and *Austin* have enrolled in the black List: Had not the Enemy of Truth and Peace got into the Chair, and made so pathetique an Oration as to inflame the minds of the Lovers of Truth to be over-zealous for it, & to do too much, we might have had Truth and Peace to this day. Yea still, if he see any man of Experience and Moderation stand up to reduce men to the antient simplicity, he presently seems the most zealous for Christ, and tels the unexperienced Leaders of the flocks, that it is in favour of some Heresy that

that such a man speaks; he is plotting a Carnal Syncretism, and attempting the reconcilement of Christ and *Belial*; he is tainted with Popery, or Socinianism, or Arminianism, or Calvinism, or whatsoever may make him odious with those he speaks to. O what the Devil hath got by Over-doing?

And as this is true in Doctrines, so is it in Worship, and Discipline, and Pastoral Authority and Government. When the Serpent could not get the World to despise the poor Fishermen that published the Gospel, (the Devil being Judged, and the World Convinced by the Power of the Holy Ghost, the Agent, Advocate and Vicar of Christ on earth) he will then be the forwardest to honour and promote them: And if he cannot make *Constantine* a Persecutor of them, he will perswade him to raise them in worldly glory to the Stars, and make them Lords of *Rome*, and possess them with Princely Dignities and Revenues. And he hath got as much by over-honouring them, as ever he did by persecuting and despising them. And now in *England*, when this plot is descryed, and we had taken down that superfluous honour, as Antichristian, what doth the Devil but set in again on the other side? and none is so Zealous a Reformer as he. He cryes down all as Antichristian, which he desireth

should

ſhould fall: Their Tythes and Maintenance are Antichriſtian and oppreſſive (O Pious Merciful Devil) down with them! Theſe Church-lands were given by Papiſts to Popiſh uſes, to maintain Biſhops, and Deans, and Chapters: down with them. Theſe Colledge-lands, theſe Cathedrals, nay theſe Church-houſes, or Temples (for ſo Ile call them, whether the Devil will or no) all come from Idolaters, and are abuſed to Idolatry: down with them. Nay think you but he hath taken the boldneſs to cry out, Theſe Prieſts, theſe Miniſters, are all Antichriſtian, Seducers, Needleſs, Enviers of the ſpirit of Propheſy, and of the Gifts of their Brethren, Monopolizers of Preaching: down with them too! So that though he yet have not what he would have, the old Serpent hath done more as a Reformer by over-doing, then he did in many a year as a Deformer or hinderer of Reformation: Yet if he do but ſee that there is a Soveraign Power that can do him a Miſchief, he is ready to tell them, They muſt be Merciful, and not deal Cruelly with ſinners! Nay it belongs not to them to reform, or to Judge who are Hereticks and who not. or to reſtrain falſe doctrine, or Church-diſturbers. Chriſt is ſufficient for this himſelf.] How oft hath the Devil preached thus, to tye the hands of thoſe that might wound him?

Would

Would you see any further how he hath play'd this successful game of *Over-doing?* Why he hath done as much by it in Worship and Discipline, as almost in any thing: When he cannot have Discipline neglected, he is an over-zealous spirit in the breasts of the Clergy; and he perswades them to appoint men Penance, and Pilgrimages, and to put the necks of Princes under their feet. But if this Tyrannie must be abated, he cryes down all Discipline, and tels them it is all but Tyrannie and humane Inventions; And this confessing sin to Ministers for Relief of Conscience; and this open Confessing in the Congregation for a due Manifestation of Repentance, and satisfaction to the Church, that they may hold Communion with them, it is all but Popery and Priestly Domineering.

And in matter of Worship, worst of all: When he could not perswade the world to persecute Christ, and to refuse him and his Worship, the Serpent will be the most zealous Worshipper, and saith, as *Herod*, and with the same mind, *Come and tell me, that I may worship him.* He perswades men to Do and Over-do: He sets them on laying out their Revenues in sumptuous Fabricks, in fighting to be Masters of the Holy Land and Sepulcher of Christ; on going Pilgrimages,

Worſhipping Saints, Angels, Shrines, Reliques, Adoring the very bread of the Sacrament as God, exceſſive faſtings, choyce of meats, Numbred Prayers on beads, Repetitions of words, ſo many *Ave Maries*, *Pater Noſters*, the name Jeſus ſo oft Repeated in a breath, ſo many Holy-days to Saints, Canonical hours, even at midnight to pray, and that in Latine for greater reverence, Croſſings, holy garments, variety of preſcribed geſtures, kneeling and worſhipping before Images, ſacrificing Chriſt again to his Father in the Maſs; forſwearing Marriage; living retiredly as ſeparate from the world; multitudes of new preſcribed Rules and orders of life; vowing poverty; begging without need; creeping to the Croſs, Holy water, and Holy bread, carrying Palms, kneeling at Altars, bearing Candles, Aſhes; In Baptiſm, Croſſing, Conjuring out the Devil, ſalting, ſpittle, oyl; taking Pardons, Indulgencies and Diſpenſations of the Pope; praying for the Dead, perambulations, ſerving God to Merit Heaven, or to eaſe ſouls in Purgatory; doing Works of ſupererogation, with multitudes the like: All theſe hath the Devil added to Gods Worſhip, ſo zealous a Worſhipper of Chriſt is he, when he takes that way. Read Mr. *Herberts Church Militant* of *Rome*, pag. 188, 189, 190. I could trace this

this Deceiver yet further, and tell you wherein, when he could not hinder Reformation in *Luthers* days, he would needs over-do in Reforming! But O how ſad an example of it have we before our eyes in *England*! Never people on earth more hot upon Reforming! Never any deeper engaged for it. The Devil could not hinder it by fire and ſword; when he ſees that, he will needs turn Reformer as I ſaid before, and he gets the Word, and cryes down Antichriſt, and cryes up Reformation, till he hath done what we ſee! He hath made a *Babel* of our work, by confounding our languages; For though he will be for Reformation too, yet his name is *Legion*, he is an Enemy to the one God, one Mediator and Head, one Faith and one Baptiſm, one heart, and lip, and one way. Unity is the chief butt that he ſhoots at. Is Baptiſm to be Reformed? Chriſt is ſo moderate a Reformer, that he onely bids, Down with the Symbolical Myſtical Rite of mans vain addition. But the Serpent is a more Zealous Reformer: He ſaith, Out with expreſs Covenanting! Out with Children; They are a corruption of the Ordinance: and to others he ſays, Out with Baptiſm it ſelf. We might follow him thus through other Ordinances. Indeed he ſo Overdoes in his Reforming, that he would not leave us a Goſpel, a Miniſtry, a Magiſtracy

to be for Christ, an Ordinance, no nor a Christ: (though yet he would seem to own a God, and the light of Nature.) All these with him are Antichristian.

By this time I hope you see that this way of Over-doing hath another Author then many zealous people do imagine: and that it is the Devils common successful trade: so that his Agents in State-Assemblies are taught his Policy, *When you have no other Way of un-doing, let it be by over-doing.* And the same way he takes with the souls of particular persons: If he see them troubled for sin, and he cannot keep them from the knowledge of Christ and free Grace, he puts the name of [*free Grace and Gospel-preaching*] upon Antinomian and Libertine errours which subvert the very Gospel and free Grace it self. If he see men convinc't of this, and that it is neither common nor Religious Libertinism and sensuality that will bring men to Heaven, then he will labour to make Papists of them, and to set them on a task of external formalities, or macerating their bodies with hurtful fastings, watchings and cold, as if self-murther were the highest pitch of Religion, and God had a pleasure to see his people Torment themselves! I confess it is very few that ever I knew to have erred far in Austere usage of their bodies: But some I have;

have; and especially poor Melancholy Christians that are more easily drawn to deal rigorously with their flesh then others be. And such Writings as lately have been published by some English Popish Formalists, I have known draw men into this snare. I would have all such remember, 1. That God is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth: and such Worshippers doth he seek. 2. That God will have mercy and not sacrifice; and that the Vitals of Religion are in a Consumption when the heat of Zeal is drawn too much to the out-side. And that placing most in externals is the great character of Hypocrisie, and is that Pharisaical Religion to which the doctrine and practice of the Lord Jesus was most opposite, as any that will read the Gospel may soon see. 3. That God hath made our bodies to be his Servants, and Instruments of Righteousness, *Rom.* 6. 13. and helpful and serviceable to our souls in Well-doing: And therefore it is Disobedience, it is Injustice, it is Cruelty to disable them, and causlesly to vex and torment them, much more to destroy them. You may see by sick men, by Melancholy men, by Mad men and Children, how unfit that soul is to know, or Love, or serve God, that hath not a fit body to work in & by. The Serpent knows this well enough:

If he can but get you by exceſſive faſtings, watchings, labours, ſtudies, or other auſterities, eſpecially ſadneſs and perplexities of mind, to have a ſick body, a crazed brain, or a ſhort life, you will be able to do him but little hurt, and God but little ſervice, beſides the pleaſure that he takes in your own Vexation. Nay he will hope to make a further advantage of your weakneſs, and to keep many a ſoul in the ſnares of ſenſuality, by telling them of your miſeries: and ſaying to them, *Doſt thou not ſee in ſuch a man or woman, what it is to be ſo holy and preciſe? They will all run mad at laſt: If once thou grow ſo ſtrict, and deny thy ſelf thy Pleaſures, and take this preciſe courſe, thou wilt but make thy life a miſery, and never have a merry day again.* Such examples as yours the Devil will make uſe of, that he may terrifie poor ſouls from Godlineſs, and repreſent the word and ways of Chriſt to them in an odious, and unpleaſing, and diſcouraging ſhape. Doubtleſs that God who himſelf is ſo Merciful to your Body as well as to your Soul, would have you to be ſo too: He that provideth ſo plentifully for its refreſhment, would not have you refuſe his proviſion. He that ſaith the Righteous man is merciful to his beaſt, no doubt would not have him to be unmerciful to his own body. You are commanded to

Love

Love your Neighbour but as your self: And therefore by cruelty and unmerciful dealing with your *Own* body, you will go about to Justifie the like dealing with others. You durst not deny to feed, to cloath, to comfort and refresh the poor, lest Christ should say, *You did it not to me.* And how should you dare to deny the same to your self? How will you answer God for the neglect of all that service which you should have done him, and might, if you had not disabled your bodies and minds? He requireth that you Delight your self in him: And how can you do that when you habituate both mind and body to a sad, dejected, mournful garb? The service that God requires, is, *To serve him with chearfulness in the abundance that we possess,* Deut. 28. 47. If you think that I here contradict what I said in the former Directions, for pinching the flesh, and denying its desires, you are mistaken: I onely shew you the danger of the contrary extreme. Gods way lieth between both. The truth is (if you would be resolved how far you may please or displease the flesh), The flesh being ordained to be our servant and Gods servant, must be used as a servant: You will give your servant food, and raiment, and wholsom lodging, and good usage, or else you are unjust, and he will be unfit to do your work:

But ſo far as he would Maſter you, or diſobey you, you will correct him or keep him under. You will feed your horſe, or elſe he will not carry you: But if he grow unruly, you muſt tame him. It is a deluſory formality of Papiſts to tye all the Countries to one time and meaſure of faſting, as Lent, Fridays, &c. when mens ſtates are ſo various that many (though not quite ſick) have more need of a reſtoring diet; and thoſe that need faſting, need it not all at once, nor in one meaſure, but at the time, and in the meaſure, as the taming of their fleſh requireth it. As if a Phyſician ſhould proclaim that all his Patients ſhould take Phyſick ſuch 40 days every year, whether their diſeaſe be plethorick or conſuming, from fulneſs or from abſtinence, and whether the diſeaſe take him at that time of the year or another. And remember that you muſt not under pretences of ſaving the body, diſable it to ſerve God. You will not lay any ſuch correction on your Child or Servant as ſhall diſable them from their work, but ſuch as ſhall excite them to it. And underſtand that all your Afflicting your body muſt be but either Preventive, as keeping the fire from the thatch, or Medicinal and Corrective, and not ſtrictly Vindictive: for that belongs to your Judge: Though in a ſubordination to the other ends, the ſmart or ſuffering

ſuffering for its fault, is one end, and ſo it is truly Penal or Vindictive, as all Chaſtiſement is: And ſo *Paul* ſaith, *Behold what Revenge, &c.* 2 Cor. 7. 11. But not as meer Judicial Revenge is. Remember therefore, though you muſt ſo far tame your Body as to bring it into ſubjection, that you periſh not by pampering it; yet not ſo far as to bring it to weakneſs, and ſickneſs, and unfitneſs for its duty: Nor yet muſt you dare to conceit that you pleaſe God, or ſatisfie him for your ſin, by ſuch a wronging and hurting your own body. Such Popiſh Religiouſneſs ſhews that men have very low and carnal conceits of God. Was it not a baſe wickedneſs in them that offered their Children in ſacrifice, to think that God would be pleaſed with ſuch cruelty? Yea, were it not to have directed us to Chriſt, he would not have accepted of the blood of buls and goats: It is not ſacrifice that he deſires: He never was blood-thirſty, nor took any pleaſure in the Creatures ſuffering. How can you think then that he will take pleaſure in your conſuming and deſtroying your own bodies? It is as unreaſonable as to imagine that he delights to have men cut their own throats, or hang themſelves; for pining and conſuming ones ſelf is ſelf-murther as well as that. Yet I know no man ſhould draw back from a

painful or hazardous work when God cals him to it, for fear of destroying the flesh: But do not make work or suffering for your selves. God will lay as much Affliction on you as you need; and be thankful if he will enable you to bear that: but you have no need to adde more. If your selves make the suffering, how can you with any encouragement beg strength of God to bear it? and if you have not strength, what will you do? Nay how can you pray for deliverance from Gods Afflictings, when you make more of your own? And thus I have shewed you the danger of Over-doing, and what a hindrance it is to a setled Peace, both of Church (State) and Soul; though perhaps it may not condemn a particular Soul so certainly (in most parts of it) as doing too little will.

5. The next part of my Direction (first expreſt) is, that *You avoyd causeless scruples*, about doctrines, duties, sins or your own state.

These are also Engines of the Enemy to batter the Peace and Comfort of your soul; He knows that it is chearful Obedience with a confidence of Christs Merits and Mercies that God Accepteth: And therefore if he cannot hinder a poor soul from setting upon Duty, he will hinder him if he can by these scruples from a chearful and prosperous progress.

greſs. Firſt, if he can, he will take in ſcruples about the Truth of his Religion, and ſhewing him the many opinions that are in the world, he will labour to bring the poor Chriſtian to a loſs. Or elſe he will aſſault him by the men of ſome particular Sect, to draw him to that party, and ſo by corrupting his Judgement to break his Peace: or at leaſt to trouble his head, and divert his thoughts from God, by tedious Diſputes. The Papiſts will tell him that they are the onely true Catholick Church (as if they had got a Monopoly or Patent for Religion, and had confined Chriſt to themſelves) who are ſuch notorious abuſers of him. And as if all the Churches of *Greece*, *Ethiopia* and the reſt of the world were unchurcht by Chriſt to humour Maſter Pope, though they be far more in Number, and many of them ſounder in doctrine then the Romaniſts are; Thoſe of other parties will do the like, each one to draw him to their own way. And the Devil would make him believe that there are as many Religions as there be odde Opinions: when, alas, the Chriſtian Religion is one, and but one, conſiſting, for the doctrinals, in thoſe fundamentals contained in our Creed: and mens leſſer erroneous opinions are but the ſcabs that adhere to their Religion:

Onely

Onely the Church of *Rome* is a very Leper, whose infectious disease doth compel us to avoyd her company: (As for any sort of men that deny the Fundamentals, I will not call them by the name of Christians) So also in Duties of Worship Satan will be casting in Scruples. If they should hear the Word, he will cause them to be scrupling the calling of the Minister, or something in his doctrine, to discourage them. If they should Dedicate their Children to Christ in the Baptismal Covenant, he will be raising scruples about the Lawfulness of Baptizing Infants: When they should solace their souls at the Lords Supper, or other Communion of the Church, he will be raising scruples about the fitness of every one that they are to Joyn with, and whether it be lawful to Joyn with such an Ignorant man, or such a wicked man; or whether it be a true Church, or rightly gathered, or governed, or the Minister a true Minister, and twenty the like. When they should Joyn with the Church in the singing of Gods Praises, he will move one to scruple singing *Davids* Psalms, another to scruple singing among the ungodly, another singing Psalms that agree not to every mans condition; another, because our Translation is bad, or our Meeter defective, and we might have better. When men should spend the Lords Day in

Gods Spiritual Worſhip, he cauſeth one to ſcruple whether the Lords Day be of Divine Inſtitution: another he drives into the other extreme, to ſcruple almoſt every thing that is not worſhip; Whether they may provide their meat on that day (when yet it is a ſolemn day of thankſgiving, and they ſcruple not much more on other thankſgiving days) or whether they may ſo much as move a ſtick out of their way; Others he moves to trouble themſelves with ſcruples, at what hour the day begins and ends, and the like: Whereas if they, 1. Underſtood that worldly reſt is commanded but as a help to ſpiritual Worſhip. 2. And that they muſt imploy as much of that day in Gods work as they do of other days in their Callings, and reſt in the night as at other times, and that God looks to Time for the Works ſake, and not at the Work for the Time ſake; this would caſt out moſt of their ſcruples. The like courſe Satan takes with Chriſtians in Reading, Praying in ſecret, or in their families, Teaching their families, Reproving Sinners, Teaching the Ignorant, Meditation, and all other duties, too long to mention the particular ſcruples which he thruſts into mens heads, much more to Reſolve them, which would require a large Volume alone.

Now I would intreat all ſuch Chriſtians

to consider how little they Please God, and how much they Please Satan, and how much they break their own Peace, and the Peace of the Churches. If you send a man on a Journey, would you like him better that would stand Questioning and scrupling every step he goes, whether he set the right foot before? or whether he should go in the foot-path, or in the road? or him that would chearfully go on, not thinking which foot goeth forward; and rather step a little beside the path, and in again, then to stand scrupling when he should be going. If you send reapers into your harvest, which would you like better? Him that would stand scrupling how many straws he should cut down at once, and at what height, and with fears of cutting them too high or too low, too many at once or too few, should do you but little work? Or Him that would do his work chearfully as well as he can? Would you not be angry at such childish unprofitable diligence or curiosity as is a hindrance to your work? And is it not so with our Master? There was but one of those parties in the right that *Paul* spoke to, *Rom.* 14, & 15. And yet he not onely perswades them to bear with one another, and not to Judge one another, but to receive the weak in faith, and not to doubtful disputations: but he bids them, Let every man

be fully perſwaded in his own mind. How? Can he that erreth be fully perſwaded in his errour? Yes: he may go on boldly, and confidently, not troubling himſelf with demurs in his duty, as long as he took the ſafer ſide in his doubt. Not that this ſhould encourage any to venture on ſin, or to neglect a due enquiry after Gods mind. But I ſpeak againſt tormenting ſcruples, which do no work, but hinder from it, and ſtay us from our Duty.

The ſame I ſay againſt ſcruples about your ſins: Satan will make you believe that every thing is a ſin, that he may diſquiet you, if he cannot get you to believe that nothing almoſt is ſin, that he may deſtroy you. You ſhall not put a bit in your mouth but he will move a ſcruple whether it were not too Good, or too much. You ſhall not cloath your ſelf but he will move you to ſcruple the lawfulneſs of it. You ſhall not come into any company but he will afterward vex you about every word you ſpoke, leſt you ſinned.

The like I may ſay alſo about your condition: but more of that anon.

DIRECTION XXVII.

27. When God hath once ſhewed you a Certainty, or but a ſtrong probability of your ſincerity and his ſpecial Love: Labour to fix this ſo deep in your Apprehenſion and Memory, that it may ſerve for the time to come, and not onely for the preſent: And leave not your ſoul too open to Changes upon every New Apprehenſion, nor to queſtion all that's paſt upon every Jealouſie: Except when ſome Notable declining to the world and the fleſh, or a committing of Groſs ſins, or a wilfulneſs or careleſneſs in other ſins that you may avoyd, do give you juſt Cauſe of queſtioning your ſincerity, and bringing your ſoul again to the bar, and your eſtate to a more exact review.

SOme Antinomian Writers and Preachers you ſhall meet with, who will perſwade you, whatſoever ſins you fall into, never more

more to queſtion your Juſtification or Salvation. I have ſaid enough before to prove their doctrine deteſtable. Their reaſon is, Becauſe God changeth not as we change, and Juſtification is never loſt. To which I anſwer, 1. God hated us while we were workers of Iniquity, *Pſal.* 11. 5. & 5. 5. and was angry with us when we were Children of wrath, *Eph.* 3. 1, 2, 3. And afterward he laid by that Hatred and Wrath: and all this without change. If we cannot reach to apprehend how Gods unchangeableneſs can ſtand with the fulleſt and frequenteſt expreſſions of him in Scripture, muſt we therefore deny what thoſe expreſſions do contain? As *Auſtin* ſaith, Shall we deny that which is plain, becauſe we cannot reach that which is obſcure and difficult? 2. But if theſe men had well ſtudied the Scriptures, they might have known that the ſame man that was yeſterday Hated as an Enemy, may to Day be Reconciled and loved as a Son, and that without any change in God; even as it fals out within the reach of our Knowledge: For God Ruleth the world by his Laws: They are his Moral Inſtruments: By them he Condemneth: By them he Juſtifieth; ſo far as he is ſaid in this Life, before the Judgement day, to do it (unleſs there be any other ſecret act of Juſtification with him, which man

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is not able now to understand.) The change is therefore in our Relations, and in the Moral Action of the Laws. When we are Unbelievers and Impenitent, we are Related to God as Enemies, Rebels, Unjustified and Unpardoned: being such as Gods Law Condemneth and pronounceth Enemies; and the Law of Grace doth not yet Justifie or pardon: and so God is, as it were, in some sense obliged according to that Law which we are under, to deal with us as Enemies by destroying us: And this is Gods Hating, Wrath, &c. When we Repent, Return and Believe, our Relation is changed: The same Law that did Condemn us, is Relaxed and Disabled, and the Law of Grace doth now Acquit us; it Pardoneth us, it Justfieth us; and God by it: And so God is Reconciled to us, when we are such as according to his own Law of Grace, he is, as it were, Obliged to forgive and to do Good to and to use as sons. Is not all this apparently without any change in God! Cannot he make a Law that shall change its Moral Action according to the change of the actions or inclinations of sinners? and this without any change in God? And so, If it should so be, that a Justified man should fall from God, from Christ, from sincere Faith or Obedience, the Law would Condemn him again, and the Law of Grace

Grace would Juſtifie him no more (in that ſtate) and all this without any change in God. 3. If this Antinomian Argument would prove any thing, it would prove Juſtification before and ſo without Chriſts ſatisfaction, becauſe there is no change in God. 4. The very point, *That no juſtified man ſhall ever fall from Chriſt*, is not ſo clear and fully revealed in Scripture, and paſt all doubt from the aſſault of Objections, as that a poor ſoul in ſuch a Relapſed eſtate ſhould venture his everlaſting ſalvation wholly on this; ſuppoſing that he were Certain that he was once ſincere. For my own part, I am perſwaded that no Rooted Believer, that is Habitually and Groundedly Reſolved for Chriſt, and hath crucified the fleſh and the world (as all have that are throughly Chriſts) do ever fall quite away from him afterwards. But I dare not lay my ſalvation on this. And, if I were no ſurer of my ſalvation, then I am of the truth of this my Judgement, to ſpeak freely, my ſoul would be in a very ſad Condition. 5. But ſuppoſe it as certain and plain as any word in the Goſpel, (that a Juſtified man is never quite Unjuſtified) Yet as every new ſin brings a new obligation to puniſhment (or elſe they could not be pardoned, as needing no pardon) ſo muſt every ſin have its particular pardon, (and conſequently, the ſinner a particular

ticular Justification from the Guilt of that sin) besides his first general pardon (and Justification:) (For to pardon sin before it is committed, is to pardon sin that is no sin, which is a Contradiction, and Impossibility.) Now, though for daily unavoydable Infirmities, there be a pardon of Course, upon the Title of our Habitual Faith and Repentance; yet whether in case of Gross sin, or more notable Defection, this will prove a sufficient Title to particular pardon, without the addition of actual Repentance; and what Case the sinner is in till that actual Repentance and Faith, as I told you before, are so difficult questions (it being ordered by Gods great wisdom that they should be so) that it beseems no wise man to venture his salvation on his own opinion in these. Nay it's certain, that if Gross sinners having opportunity, and knowledge of their sins, Repent not, they shall perish. And therefore I think, a Justified man hath great Reason upon such fals, to examine his particular Repentance, (as well as his former state) and not to promise himself, or presume upon a pardon without it. 6. And besides all this, though both the Continuance of Faith, and non-intercision of Justification be never so certain, yet when a mans obedience is so far overthrown, his former Evidences and Perswasi-

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ons of his Juſtification will be uncertain to him. Though he have no Reaſon to think that God is changeable, or Juſtification will be loſt, yet he hath Reaſon enough to queſtion whether ever he were a true Believer, and ſo were ever Juſtified. For Faith worketh by Love: and they that Love Chriſt will keep his Commandments. Libertines and carnal men may talk their pleaſure: but when Satan maintains not their Peace, ſin will break it: and Dr. *Sibs* words will be found true, *Souls Conflict*, pag. 41, 42. *Though the main pillar of our Comfort be the free forgiveneſs of our ſins, yet if there be a neglect of growing in Holineſs, the ſoul will never be ſoundly quiet, becauſe it will be prone to queſtion the truth of Juſtification: and it is as proper for ſin to raiſe doubts and fears in the Conſcience, as for rotten fleſh and Wood to breed Worms: Where there is not a pure Conſcience, there is not a pacified Conſcience, &c.* Read the reſt.

This much I have been fain to premiſe, leſt my words for Conſolation ſhould occaſion ſecurity and deſolation. But now let me deſire you to peruſe the Direction, and practice it. If when God hath given you Aſſurance, or ſtrong probabilities of your ſincerity, you will make uſe of it but onely for that preſent time, you will never then have

have a ſetled Peace in your ſoul: Beſides, the great wrong you do to God, by neceſſitating him to be ſo often renewing ſuch diſcoveries, and repeating the ſame words to you ſo often over. If your Child offend you, would you have him when he is pardoned no longer to believe it then you are telling it him? Should he be ſtill asking you over and over every day, *Father, am I forgiven, or no?* Should not one anſwer ſerve his turn? Will you not believe that your money is in your purſe or cheſt any longer then you are looking on it? Or that your corn is growing on your land, or your cattel in your grounds any longer then you are looking on them? By this Courſe a Rich man ſhould have no more content then a beggar, longer then he is looking on his money, or goods, or lands: and when he is looking on one, he ſhould again loſe the Comfort of all the reſt. What hath God given you a Memory for, but to lay up former apprehenſions, and diſcoveries, and experiences, and make uſe of them on all meet occaſions afterwards? Let me therefore perſwade you to this great and neceſſary work. When God hath once Reſolved your Doubts, and ſhewed you the truth of your Faith, Love or Obedience, Write it down, if you can, in your book (as I have adviſed you in my Treatiſe

Treatise of *Rest*) *Such a day upon serious perusal of my heart I found it thus and thus with my self.* Or at least, Write it deep in your Memory; And do not suffer any fancies, or fears, or light surmises to cause you to question this again, as long as you fall not from the Obedience or Faith which you then discovered. Alas, mans Apprehension is a most mutable thing: If you leave your soul open to every new apprehension, you will never be setled: You may think two contrary things of your self in an hour. You have not always the same opportunity for right discerning, nor the same clearness of Apprehension, nor the same outward means to help you, nor the same inward Assistance of the Holy Ghost: When you have these therefore, make use of them, and fix your wavering soul, and take your Question and Doubt as Resolved, and do not tempt God, by calling him to new Answers again and again, as if he had given you no answer before. You will never want some occasion of Jealousie and fears as long as you have Corruption in your heart, and sin in your life, and a Tempter to be troubling you: But if you will suffer any such wind to shake your Peace and Comforts, you will be always shaking, and fluctuating as a wave of the Sea. And you must labour to apprehend not onely the

the Uncomfortableneſs, but the Sinfulneſs alſo of this courſe. For though the queſtioning your own ſincerity on every ſmall occaſion be not near ſo great a ſin, as the queſtioning of Gods Merciful Nature, or the truth of his Promiſe, or his Readineſs to ſhew Mercy to the Penitent ſoul, or the Freeneſs and Fulneſs of the Covenant of Grace: yet even this is no contemptible ſin. For 1. You are doing Satans work, in denying Gods Graces, and Accuſing your ſelf falſly; and ſo pleaſing the Devil in Diſquieting your ſelf. 2. You ſlander Gods Spirit as well as your own ſoul, in ſaying, He hath not Renewed and Sanctified you, when he hath. 3. This will neceſſitate you to further Unthankfulneſs: for who can be Thankful for a Mercy that thinks he never received it? 4. This will ſhut your mouth againſt all thoſe Praiſes of God, and that Heavenly joyful Commemoration of his great unſpeakable Love to your ſoul, which ſhould be the bleſſed work of your life. 5. This will much abate your Love to God, and your ſenſe of the Love of Chriſt in dying for you; and all the reſt of your Graces, while you are ſtill queſtioning your Intereſt in Gods Love. 6. It will lay ſuch a diſcouragement on your ſoul, as will both deſtroy the ſweetneſs of all Duties to you (which is a great evil) and thereby

thereby make you backward to them, and heartleſs in them: You will have no mind of Praying, Meditation, or other duties, becauſe all will ſeem dark to you, and you will think that every thing makes againſt you. 7. You rob all about you of that chearful encouraging example & perſwaſion which they ſhould have from you, and by which you might win many ſouls to God: And contrarily you are a diſcouragement and hindrance to them. I could mention many more ſinful aggravations of your denying Gods Graces in you on every ſmall inſufficient occaſion; which methinks ſhould make you be very tender of it, if not to avoyd unneceſſary Trouble to your ſelf, yet at leaſt to avoyd ſin againſt God.

And what I have ſaid of Evidences and Aſſurance, I would have you underſtand alſo of your Experiences. You muſt not make Uſe onely at the preſent of your Experiences, but lay them up for the time to come. Nor muſt you tempt God ſo far as to expect new Experiences upon every new ſcruple or doubt of yours, as the Iſraelites expected New Miracles in the Wilderneſs, ſtill forgetting the Old. If a Scholar ſhould in his Studies forget all that he hath Read and Learned, and all the Reſolutions of his Doubts which in ſtudy he hath attained, and leave his Underſtanding ſtill as an unwritten Paper, as Re-

ceptive of every Mutation and New Apprehenſion, and contrary Conceit, as if he had never ſtudied the Point before, he will make but a poor proficiency, and have but a fluctuating unſetled brain. A Scholar ſhould make all the ſtudies of his Life to compoſe one entire Image of Truth in his ſoul, as a Painter makes every line he draws to compoſe one entire picture of a man; and as a Weaver makes every thred to compoſe one Web: ſo ſhould you make all former Examinations, Diſcoveries, Evidences and Experiences, Compoſe one full Diſcovery of your Condition, that ſo you may have a ſetled Peace of ſoul: And ſee that you tye both Ends together; and neither look on your preſent troubled ſtate without your former, leſt you be unthankful, and unjuſtly diſcouraged; nor on your former ſtate without obſervance of your preſent frame of heart and life, leſt you deceive your ſelf, or grow ſecure. O that you could well obſerve this Direction! How much would it help you to eſcape extreams, and Conduce to the ſetling of a well-grounded Peace, and at once, to the well ordering of your whole Converſation.

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DIRECTION XXVIII.

Be very Careful that you create not perplexities and terrors to your own ſoul, by raſh miſ-interpretations of any Paſſages either of Scripture, of Gods Providence, or of the Sermons or private Speeches of Miniſters: But Reſolve with Patience, yea with Gladneſs, to ſuffer Preachers to deal with their Congregations in the moſt ſearching, ſerious, and awakening manner: leſt your weakneſs ſhould be a wrong to the whole Aſſembly, and poſſibly the undoing of many a ſenſual, drowſy or obſtinate ſoul, who will not be convinced and awaked by a Comforting way of Preaching, or by any ſmoother or gentler means.

HEre are three dangerous enemies to your Peace, which (for brevity) I warn you of together.

1. Rash Mis-interpretations and mis-applications of Scripture. Some weak-headed Troubled Christians can scarce read a Chapter, or hear one read, but they'l find something which they think doth Condemn them. If they read of Gods Wrath and Judgement, they think it is meant against them. If they read, *Our God is a Consuming Fire*, they think presently it's themselves that must be the Fewel: Whereas Justice and Mercy have each their proper objects: The burningst Fire will not waste the Gold, nor is Water the Fewel of it: But combustible matter it will presently consume. An humble soul, that lies prostrate at Christs feet, confessing its unworthiness, and bewailing its sinfulness, this is not the object of Revenging Justice: Such a soul bringing Christs Merits, and pleading them with God, is so far from being the Fewel of this Consuming Fire, that he bringeth that water which will undoubtedly quench it. Yet this Scripture-expression of our God, may subdue carnal security even in the best, but not dismay them or discourage them in their hopes. Another reads in *Psal.* 50. *I will set thy sins in order before thee*; and he thinks, certainly God will deal thus by him. Not considering, that God chargeth onely their sins upon them that charge them not by true Repentance on themselves,

themſelves, and Accept not of Chriſt who hath Diſcharged them by his blood. It is the excuſers, and mincers, and defenders of ſin, that love not thoſe that Reprove them, and that will not avoyd them, nor the occations of them, that would not be Reformed, and will not be perſwaded, in whoſe ſouls Iniquity hath Dominion, and that Delight in it, it is theſe on whom God Chargeth their ſin: *For this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and men Love Darkneſs rather then Light: and come not to the Light, leſt their deeds ſhould be Reproved*, Joh. 3. 20, 21. But for the ſoul that trembleth at Gods Word, and Comes home to God with ſhame and ſorrow, Reſolving to return no more to wickedneſs, God is ſo far from Charging his ſins upon him, that he never mentioneth them, as I told you, is evident in the Caſe of the Prodigal. He makes not a poor ſinners burthen more heavy by hitting him in the teeth with his ſins, but makes it the office of his Son to eaſe him by disburthening him.

Many more Texts might be named (and perhaps it would not be loſt labour) which Troubled Souls do miſ-underſtand and miſ-apply: but it would make this Writing tedious, which is already ſwell'd ſo far beyond my firſt intention.

2. The ſecond Enemy of your Peace here mentioned, is, *Miſ-underſtanding and miſ-applying Paſſages of Providence.* Nothing more common with Troubled ſouls, then upon every new Croſs and Affliction that befals them, preſently to think, God takes them for Hypocrites! and to queſtion their ſincerity! As if *David* and *Iob* had not left them a full warning againſt this Temptation. Do you loſe your Goods? ſo did *Iob*. Do you loſe your Children? ſo did *Iob*: and that in no very Comfortable way. Do you loſe your Health? ſo did *Iob*. What if your godly friends ſhould come about you in this Caſe, and bend all their wits and ſpeeches to perſwade you that you are but an Hypocrite? as *Iobs* friends did by him? Would not this put you harder to it? Yet could *Iob* reſolve, *I will not let go mine Integrity till I dye.* I know Gods Chaſtiſements are all Paternal Puniſhments: and that Chriſtians ſhould ſearch and try their hearts and ways at ſuch times; but not conclude that they are Graceleſs ever the more for being Afflicted, ſeeing *God chaſteneth every ſon whom he receiveth*, *Heb.* 12. 6, 7. And in ſearching after ſin it ſelf in your Afflictions, be ſure that you make the Word, and not your ſufferings, the Rule to diſcover how far you have ſinned; and let Afflictions onely quicken you to

to try by the Word. How many a Soul have I known that by miſ-interpreting Providences, have in a blind Jealouſy been termed quite from Truth and Duty, ſuppoſing it had been errour and ſin? and all becauſe of their Afflictions? As a fooliſh man in his ſickneſs accuſeth the laſt meat that he ate before he fell ſick, though it might be the wholſomeſt that ever he ate, and the diſeaſe may have many Cauſes which he is Ignorant of. One man being ſick, a buſy ſeducing Papiſt comes to him (for it is their uſe to take ſuch opportunities) and tels him, *It is Gods hand upon you for forſaking or ſtraying from the Roman Catholick Church; and God hath ſent this Affliction to bring you home: all your Anceſtors lived and dyed in this Church, and ſo muſt you if ever you will be ſaved.* The poor Jealous affrighted ſinner hearing this, and through his Ignorance being unable to anſwer him, thinks it is even true, and preſently turns Papiſt. In the ſame manner do moſt other Sects. How many have the Antinomians and Anabaptiſts thus ſeduced? finding a poor ſilly woman (for it's moſt common with them) to be under ſad doubts and diſtreſs of ſoul, one tels her, *It is Gods hand on you to convince you of errour, and to bring you to ſubmit to the Ordinance of Baptiſm*: and upon this many have been Re-baptized, and

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put their foot into that snare which I have yet seen few escape and draw back from. Another comes and tels the troubled soul, *It is Legal Preaching, and looking at something in your self for Peace and Comfort, which hath brought you into this distress: As long as you follow these Legal Preachers, and read their books, and look at any thing in your self, and seek Assurance from Marks within you, it will never be better with you. These Preachers understand not the nature of free Grace, nor ever tasted it themselves, and therefore they cannot preach it, but despise it. You must know that Grace is so free that the Covenant hath no Condition: You must Believe and not look after the Marks: and Believing is but to be perswaded that God is Reconciled to you, and hath forgiven you: for you are Justified before you were born if you are one of the Elect, and can but Believe it; 'tis not any thing of your own by which you can be Justified: Nor is it any sin of yours that can unjustifie. It is the Witness of the Spirit onely perswading you of your Justification and Adoption, that can give you Assurance; and fetching it from any thing in your self, is but a resting on your own Righteousness, and forsaking Christ.* When the Antinomian hath but sung this Ignorant Charm to a poor Soul as Ignorant as himself, and prepared by terrours

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to entertain the Impreſſion, preſently it (oft) takes, and the ſinner without a wonder of Mercy is undone. This Doctrine which ſubverteth the very ſcope of the Goſpel, being entertained, ſubverteth his Faith and Obedience; and uſually the Libertiniſm of his opinion is ſeen in his Liberty of Conſcience, and Licentious practiſes: and his trouble of mind is cured, as a burning feaver, by *opium*, which gives him ſuch a ſleep that he never awaketh till he be in another world. Yet theſe errours are ſo groſs, and ſo fully againſt the expreſs Texts of Scripture, that if Miniſters would condeſcendingly, lovingly and familiarly deal with them, and do their duty, I ſhould hope many well-meaning Souls might be recovered. Thus you ſee the danger of raſh interpreting, and ſo miſinterpreting Providences. As ſuch interpretations of proſperity and ſucceſs deludeth not onely the Mahometan world, and the Prophane world, but many that ſeemed Godly; ſo many ſuch Interpretations of Adverſity and Croſſes do; eſpecially if the Seducer be but kind and liberal to relieve them in their Adverſity, he may do with many poor Souls almoſt what he pleaſe.

3. The third Enemy to your peace here mentioned, is, *Misinterpreting or misapplying the Passages of Preachers, in their Sermons, Writings, or private Speeches.* A Minister cannot deal throughly or seriously with any sort of sinners, but some fearful troubled souls apply all to themselves. I must intreat you to avoid this fault, or else you will turn Gods Ordinances, and the daily food of your souls into bitterness and wormwood, and all through your mistakes. I think there is few Ministers so preach, but you might perceive whom they mean, and they so difference as to tell you who they speak to. I confess it is a better sign of an honest heart, and self-judging conscience, to say *He speaks now to me: this is my case*: then to say, *He speaks now to such or such a one: this is their case.* For it is the property of Hypocrites to have their eye most abroad; and in every duty to be minding most the faults of others: and you may much discern such in their prayers, in that they will fill their confessions most with other mens sins, and you may feel them all the while in the bosom of their neighbours, when you may even feel a sincere man speaking his own heart, and most opening his own bosom to God. But though self-applying, and self-searching be far the better sign, yet must not any wise Christian do it mistakingly; for

for that may breed abundance of very ſad effects. For beſides the aforeſaid embittering of Gods Ordinances to you, and ſo diſcouraging you from them, do but conſider what a grief and a ſnare you may prove to your Miniſter. A grief it muſt needs be to him who knows he ſhould not make ſad the ſoul of the innocent, to think that he cannot avoid it, without avoiding his duty. When God hath put two ſeveral Meſſages in our mouthes, *Iſa.* 3.10,11. *Say to the Righteous, it ſhall be well with him*: and *Say to the Wicked, it ſhall be ill with him*; *He that believeth ſhall be ſaved*; *He that believeth not ſhall be damned*, and we ſpeak both; will you take that as ſpoken to you, which is ſpoken to the unbeliever and the wicked? Alas, how is it poſſible then for us to forbear troubling you? If you will put your head under every ſtroke that we give againſt ſin and ſinners, how can we help it if you ſmart? what a ſad caſe are we in, by ſuch miſapplications! We have but two Meſſages to deliver, and both are uſually loſt by miſapplication. The wicked ſaith, *I am the Righteous, and therefore it ſhall go well with me*: the Righteous ſaith, *I am the wicked, and therefore it ſhall go ill with me*: The Unbeliever ſaith, *I am a Believer, and therefore am juſtified*; The Believer ſaith, *I am an Unbeliever, and therefore am condemned*: nay,

it is not onely the loſs of our preaching, but we oft do them much harm: for they are hardened that ſhould be humbled; and they are wounded more that ſhould be healed. A Miniſter now muſt needs tell them, who he means by the Believer, and who by the Unbeliever; who by the Righteous, and who by the wicked: and yet when he hath done it as accurately, and as cautelouſly as he can, miſapplying ſouls will wrong themſelves by it: ſo that becauſe people cannot ſee the diſtinguiſhing line, it therefore comes to paſs that few are comforted, but when Miniſters preach nothing elſe but comfort: and few humbled, but where Miniſters bend almoſt all their endeavors that way, that people can feel almoſt nothing elſe from him: But for him that equally would divide to each their portion, each one ſnatcheth up the part of another, and he oft miſſeth of profiting either: And yet this is the courſe that we muſt take.

And what a ſnare is this to us, as well as a grief? what if we ſhould be ſo moved with compaſſion of your troubles, as to fit almoſt all our Doctrine and Application to you? what a fearful guilt ſhould we draw upon our own ſouls!

Nay, what a ſnare may you thus prove to the greater part of the Congregation? Alas,

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we have seldom past one or two, or three troubled Consciences in an Auditory (and perhaps some of their troubles be the fruit of such wilful sinning, that they have more need of greater humbling yet) should we now neglect all the rest of these poor souls, to preach only to you? O how many an ignorant hard-hearted sinner comes before God every day! Shall we let such go away as they came, without ever a blow to awaken them and stir their hearts! when alas, all that ever we can do is too little! when we preach you into tears and trembling, we preach them asleep! Could we speak swords, it would scarce make them feel, when you through misapplication have gone home with anguish and fears; how few of all these have been pricked at the heart, and said, *What shall we do to be saved?* Have you no Pity now on such stupid souls as these? I fear this one distemper of yours, that you cannot bear this rousing preaching, doth bewray another and greater sin; look to it, I beseech you; for I think I have spy'd out the cause of your trouble: Are you not your self too great a stranger to poor stupid sinners? and come not among them? or pitty them not as you should? and do not your duty for the saving of their souls? but think it belongs not to you but to others? Do you use to deal with servants

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and neighbors about you, and tell them of ſin and miſery, and the remedy, and ſeek to draw their hearts to Chriſt, and bring them to duty? I doubt you do little in this (and that is ſad unmercifulneſs:) for if you did, truly you could not chooſe but finde ſuch miſerable ignorance, ſuch ſenſeleſneſs and blockiſhneſs, ſuch hating reproof and unwillingneſs to be reformed, ſuch love of this world, and ſlavery to the fleſh, and ſo little ſavour of Chriſt, Grace, Heaven and the things of the Spirit, and eſpecially ſuch an unteachableneſs, intractableneſs (as thorns and bryars) and ſo great a difficulty of moving them an inch from what they are, that you would have been willing ever after to have *Miniſters* preach more rouſingly then they do, and you would be glad for their ſakes when you heard that which might awake them and prick them to the heart. Yea, if you had tried how hard a work it is to bring worldly formal Hypocrites to ſee their Hypocriſie, or to come over to Chriſt from the creature, and to be in good earneſt in the buſineſs of their ſalvation, you would be glad to have Preachers ſearch them to the quick, and ranſack their hearts, and help them againſt their affected and obſtinate ſelf-deluſions.

Beſides, you ſhould conſider that their Caſe

Caſe is far different from yours: Your diſeaſe is pain and trouble, they are ſtark dead: You have Gods favour and doubt of it: they are his enemies and never ſuſpect it: You want comfort, and they want pardon and life: if your diſeaſe ſhould never here be cured, it is but going more ſadly to heaven: But if they be not recovered by Regeneration, they muſt lie for ever in Hell: And ſhould we not then pitty them more then you? and ſtudy more for them? and preach more for them? and rather forget you in a Sermon then them? ſhould you not wiſh us ſo to do? ſhould we more regard the comforting of one, then the ſaving of an hundred? Nay more, we ſhould not onely neglect them but dangerouſly hurt them, if we ſhould preach too much to the caſe of troubled ſouls: For you are not ſo apt to miſapply paſſages of terror, and to take their portion, as they are apt to apply to themſelves ſuch paſſages for comfort, and take your portion to themſelves.

I know ſome will ſay, that it is preaching Chriſt, and ſetting forth Gods Love that will win them beſt, and terrors do but make unwilling Hypocrital Profeſſors. This makes me remember how I have heard ſome Preachers of the times blame their Brethren for not preaching Chriſt to their People, when

when they Preached the danger of rejecting Christ, disobeying him and resisting his Spirit. Do these men think that it is no preaching Christ (when we have first many years told men the fulness of his satisfaction, the freeness and general extent of his Covenant or Promise, and the riches of his Grace, and the incomprehensibleness of his Glory, and the Truth of all) to tell them afterwards the danger of refusing, neglecting, and disobeying him? and of living after the flesh, and preferring the world before him? and serving Mammon, and falling off in persecution, and avoiding the cross, and yielding in Temptation, and quenching the Spirit, and declining from their first Love, and not improving their Talents, and not forgiving and loving their brethren, yea and enemies? &c. Is none of this Gospel? nor preaching Christ? yea, is not Repentance it self (except despairing Repentance) proper to the Gospel, seeing the Law excludeth it, and all manner of hope. Blame me not, Reader, if I be zealous against these men, that not only know no better what preaching Christ is, but in their ignorance reproach their Brethren for not preaching Christ, and withal condemn Christ himself, and all his Apostles? Do they think that Christ himself knew not what it was to preach Christ? or that he set us a

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patern too low for our imitation? I desire them soberly to read *Mat.*5.6,7,10,25.*Rom.* 8. from the first verse to the 14. *Rom.*2. *Heb.* 2.&4. &5.& 10 and then tell me whether we preach as Christ and his Apostles did. But to the Objection: I Answer first, we do set forth Gods love, and the fulness of Christ, and the sufficiency of his death and satisfaction for all, and the freeness and extent of his offer and promise of mercy, and his readiness to welcome returning sinners: this we do first (mixing with this the discovery of their natural misery by sin, which must be first known) and next we shew them the danger of Rejecting Christ and his offer. 2. When we finde men settled under the preaching of free Grace, in a base contempt or sleepy neglect of it, preferring the world and their carnal pleasures and ease before all the Glory of heaven, and Riches of Christ and Grace, is it not time for us to say, *How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?* Heb.2.3. *and of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy that treads under foot the blood of the Covenant?* Heb. 10.26. when men grow careless and unbelieving, must we not say, *Take heed lest a promise being left of entring into his Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it?* Heb. 4.1. 3. Hath not Christ led us, commanded us and

and taught us this way? *Except ye Repent, ye shall all perish*, was his Doctrine, *Luke* 13. 3,5. *Go into the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature*: (whats that Gospel?) *He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned*, Mark 16.16. *Those mine Enemies that would not I should raign over them, bring hither and slay them before me*, Luke 19.27. Doth any of the Apostles speak more of hell-fire, and the worm that never dyeth, and the fire that never is quenched, then Christ himself doth? And do not his Apostles go the same way? even *Paul*, the greateſt preacher of faith, 2 *Thess.* 1 7,8, 9. and 2. 12, &c. What more common? Alas, what work should we make, if we should stroak and smooth all men with Antinomian language? It were the way to please all the sensual prophane multitude; but it is none of Christs way to save their souls. I am ready to think that these men would have Christ preached, as the Papists would have him pray'd to; to say, *Jesu, Jesu, Jesu*, nine times together, and this oft over, is their praying to him; and to have Christs name oft in the Preachers mouth, some men think is the right preaching Christ.

Let me now desire you hereafter, to be glad to hear Ministers awaken the prophane and dead-hearted hearers, and search all to the

the quick, and misapply nothing to your self: but if you think any passage doth neerly concern you, open your mind to the Minister privately, when he may satisfie you more fully, and that without doing hurt to others: And consider what a strait Ministers are in that have so many of so different conditions, inclinations and conversations to preach to.

DIRECTION XXIX.

29. Be sure you forget not to distinguish between Causes of Doubting of your sincerity, and causes of meer Humiliation, Repentance and Amendment: And do not raise Doubtings and Fears, where God calleth you but to Humiliation, Amendment, and fresh recourse to Christ.

THis Rule is of so great moment to your peace, that you will have daily use for it and can never maintain any true setled peace without the practice of it. What more common then for poor Christians to pour out

a multitude of complaints of their weaknesses, and wants, and miscarriages; and never consider all the while that there may be cause of sorrow in these, when yet there is no cause of doubting of their sincerity. I have shewed before, that in gross falls and great backslidings, Doubtings will arise, and sometime our fears and jealousies may not be without cause; But it is not ordinary infirmities, nor every sin which might have been avoided, that is just cause of Doubting. Nay your very Humiliation must no further be endeavored then it tends to your Recovery, and to the honouring of mercy: For it is possible that you may exceed in the measure of your Griefs. You must therefore first be resolved wherein the Truth of saving Grace doth consist, and then in all your failings and weaknesses first know, whether they contradict sincerity it self, and are such as may give just cause to question your sincerity: If they be not (as the ordinary infirmities of Believers are not) then you may and must be humbled for them, but you may not Doubt of your Salvation for them. I told you before, by what marks you may discern your sincerity, that is, wherein the nature of saving faith and holiness doth consist: Keep that in your eye: and as long as you finde that sure and clear, let nothing make

make you doubt of your Right to Christ and Glory. But, alas, how people do contradict the will of God in this! when you have sinned, God would have you bewail your folly and unkinde dealing, and fly to mercy through Christ: and this you will not do: But he would not have you torment your self with fears of damnation, and questioning his Love: and yet this you will do. You may discern by this that Humiliation and Reformation are sure of God, mans heart is so backward to it: and that vexations, doubts and fears in true Christians that should be comfortable, are not of God, mans nature is so prone to them (though the ungodly that should fear and doubt are as backward to it.)

I think it will not be unseasonable here to lay down the particular Doubts that usually trouble sincere Believers, and see how far they may be just, and how far unjust and causeless; and most of them shall be from my own former experience; and such as I have been most troubled with my self, and the rest such as are incident to true Christians, and too usual with them.

DOUBT

DOUBT. I.

I Have oft heard and read in the best Divines, that Grace is not born with us, and therefore Satan hath always possession before Christ, and keeps that possession in Peace, till Christ come and binde him and cast him out; and that this is so great a Work that it cannot choose but be observed, and for ever remembred by the soul where it is wrought; yea the several steps and passages of it may be all observed: first casting down, and then lifting up: first Wounding and killing, and then healing and reviving. But I have not observed the distinct parts and passages of this change in me, nay, I know of no such sudden observable change at all: I cannot remember that ever I was first killed, and then revived: Nor do I know by what Minister, nor at what Sermon, or other means that work which is upon me was wrought: No nor what day or moneth or year it was begun. I have slided insensibly into a Profession of Religion, I know not how: And therefore I fear that I am not sincere, and the work of true Regeneration was never yet wrought upon my soul.

ANSWER.

ANSWER.

I will lay down the full anſwer to this in theſe Propoſitions. 1. It is true that Grace is not Natural to us, or conveyed by Generation. 2. Yet it is as true that Grace is given to our Children as well as to us. That it may be ſo, and is ſo with ſome, all will grant who believe that Infants may be, and are ſaved: And that it is ſo with the Infants of Believers, I have fully proved in my Book of Baptiſm: But mark what Grace I mean: The Grace of Remiſſion of original ſin the Children of all true Believers have at leaſt a high probability of, if not a full Certainty; their parent Accepting it for himſelf and them, and Dedicating them to Chriſt, and engaging them in his Covenant, ſo that he takes them for his People, and they take him for their Lord and Saviour. And for the Grace of inward Renewing of their Natures or Diſpoſitions, it is a ſecret to us, utterly unknown whether God uſe to do it in Infants or no. 3. Gods firſt-ordained way for the working of inward holineſs is by Parents Education of their Children, and not by the publick Miniſtry of the Word: of which more anon. 4. All godly Parents do acquaint

quaint their Children with the doctrine of Christ in their Infancy, as soon as they are capable of receiving it, and do afterwards inculcate it on them more and more. 5. These Instructions of Parents are usually seconded by the workings of the Spirit according to the capacity of the Child, opening their understandings to receive it, and making an impression thereby upon the heart. 6. When these Instructions and the inward workings of the Spirit are just past the preparatory part, and above the highest step of Common Grace, and have attained to special saving Grace, is ordinarily undiscernible: & therefore as I have shewed already, in Gods usual way of working Grace, men cannot know the just day or time when they began to be in the state of Grace. And though men that have long lived in Prophaness, and are changed suddenly, may conjecture near at the time: yet those that God hath been working on early in their youth, yea or afterwards by slow degrees, cannot know the time of their first receiving the Spirit. 8. The Memories of all men are so slippery, and one thought so suddenly thrust out by another, that many a thousand souls forget those particular workings which they have truly felt. 9. The Memories of Children are far weaker then of others: and therefore it

it is leſs probable that all the Spirits workings ſhould by them be remembred. 9. And the motions of Grace are ſo various, ſometimes ſtirring one Affection, and ſometimes another; ſometimes beginning with ſmaller motions, and then moving more ſtrongly and ſenſibly, that its uſual for later motions which are more deeply affecting, to make us overlook all the former, or take them for nothing. 10. God dealeth very variouſly with his Choſen in their Converſion, as to the accidentals and circumſtances of the work. Some he calleth not home till they have run a long race in the way of Rebellion, in open drunkenneſs, ſwearing, worldlineſs, and deriſion of holineſs: Theſe he uſually humbleth more deeply, and they can better obſerve the ſeveral ſteps of the Spirit in the work; (and yet not always neither) Others he ſo reſtraineth in their youth, that though they have not ſaving Grace, yet they are not guilty of any Groſs ſins, but have a liking to the people and ways of God: and yet he doth not ſavingly convert them till long after. It is much harder for theſe to diſcern the time or manner of their Converſion: yet uſually ſome conjectures they may make: And uſually their humiliation is not ſo deep. Others, as is ſaid, have the ſaving workings of the Spirit in their very Childhood, and

these can least of all discern the certain time or order. The ordinary way of Gods dealing with those that are Children of Godly Parents, and have good Education, is, by giving them some liking of Godly persons and ways, some Conscience of sin, some Repentance, and recourse by prayer to God in Christ for mercy; yet youthful lusts and folly, and ill company, do usually much stifle it; till at last by some Affliction, or Sermon, or Book, or good Company, God setteth home the work, and maketh them more Resolute and victorious Christians. These persons now can remember that they had convictions and stirrings of Conscience when they were young, and the other fore-mentioned works: perhaps they can remember some more notable rowsings and awakenings long after, and perhaps they have had many such fits and steps, and the work hath stood at this pass for a long time, even many years together. But at which of all these Changes it was that the Soul began to be savingly sincere, I think is next to an impossibility to discern. According to that experience which I have had of the state of Christians, I am forced to Judge that most of the Children of the Godly that ever are Renewed, are Renewed in their Childhood, or much towards it then done, and that among forty Christians there

there is not one that can certainly name the month in which his ſoul firſt began to be ſincere; and among a thouſand Chriſtians, I think not one can name the hour. The Sermon which awakened them they may name, but not the hour when they firſt arrived at a ſaving ſincerity.

My advice therefore to all Chriſtians is this; *Find Chriſt by his Spirit dwelling in your hearts, and then never trouble your ſelves, though you know not the time or manner of his entrance.* Do you value Chriſt above the world? and Reſolve to chooſe him before the world? and perform theſe Reſolutions? Then need you not doubt but the Spirit of Jeſus is victorious in you.

DOUBT II.

BUT I have oft read and heard, that a man cannot come to Chriſt till he feel the heavy burthen of ſin: It is the weary and heavy-laden that Chriſt calleth to him. He bindeth up onely the broken-hearted: he is a Phyſician onely to thoſe that feel themſelves ſick: he brings men to Heaven by the gates of Hell: They muſt be able to ſay, I am in a loſt Condition, and in a ſtate of damnation, and if I ſhould dye this hour I muſt periſh for ever, before Chriſt will deliver them. God will not

throw away the blood of his Son on those that feel not their absolute necessity of it, and that they are undone without it. But it was never thus with me to this day.

ANSWER.

1. YOU must distinguish carefully between Repentance as it is in the Mind and Will, and as it shews it self in the Passion of Sorrow. All that have saving interest in Christ, have their Judgements and Wils so far changed, that they know they are great sinners, and that there is no way to the obtaining of pardon and salvation but by Christ, and the free mercy of God in him; and thereupon they are convinced that if they remain without the Grace of Christ, they are undone for ever: Whereupon they understanding that Christ and Mercy is offered to them in the Gospel, do heartily and thankfully accept the offer, and would not be without Christ, or change their Hopes of his Grace for all the world, and do resolve to wait upon him for the further discovery of his Mercy and the workings of his Spirit, in a Constant and Conscionable use of his Mears, and to be Ruled by him, to their power. Is it not thus with you? If it be, here is the Life and Substance of Repentance, which

which consisteth in this change of the mind and heart: and you have no Cause to Doubt of the truth of it, for want of more deep and passionate humiliation. 2. I have told you before how uncertain and unconstant the Passionate effects of Grace are, and how unfit to Judge by, and given you several Reasons of it. Yet I doubt not but some work upon the Affections there is, as well as on the Will and Understanding: but with so great diversity of manner and degrees, that it is not safe judging by it onely or chiefly: Is there no degree of Sorrow or Trouble that hath touched your heart for your sin or Misery? If your Affections were no whit stir'd, you would hardly be moved to Action; to use means, or avoyd iniquity, much less would you so oft complain as you do. 3. If God prevented those hainous sins in the time of your unregeneracy, which those usually are guilty of who are called to so deep a degree of sorrow, you should rather be thankful that your wound was not deeper, then troubled that the Cure cost you not dearer. Look well whether the Cure be wrought in the change of your heart and life from the world to God by Christ, and then you need not be troubled that it was wrought so easily. 4. Were you not acquainted with the evil of sin, and danger and misery of

ſinners in your very Childhood? and alſo of the neceſſity of a Saviour, and that Chriſt dyed to ſave all ſinners that will believe and Repent? and hath not this faſtned on your heart, and been working in you by Degrees ever ſince? If it be ſo, then you cannot expect that you ſhould have ſuch deep terrours as thoſe that never hear of ſin and Chriſt till the news come upon them ſuddenly in the ripeneſs of their ſin. There is a great deal of difference betwixt the Converſion of a Jew or any other Infidel, who is brought on the ſudden to know the doctrine of Sin, Miſery, and Salvation by Chriſt; and the Converſion of a Profeſſour of the Chriſtian Religion, who hath known this doctrine in ſome ſort from his Childhood, and who hath a ſound Religion, though he be not ſound in his Religion, and ſo needs not a Converſion to a ſound faith, but onely to a ſoundneſs in the faith. The ſuddenneſs of the News muſt needs make thoſe Violent Commotions and Changes in the one, which cannot ordinarily be expected in the other, who is acquainted ſo early with the truth, and by ſuch degrees. 5. But ſuppoſe you heard nothing of Sin and Miſery, and a Redeemer in your Childhood, or at leaſt underſtood it not (which yet is unlikely) yet let me ask you this: Did not that Preacher, or that Book, or whatever other

other Means God used for your Conversion, reveal to you Misery and Mercy both together? Did not you hear and believe that Christ dyed for sin, as soon as you understood your Sin and Misery? Sure I am that the Scripture reveals both together: and so doth every sound Preacher, and every sound Writer (notwithstanding that the slanderous Antinomians do shamelesly proclaim that we preach not Christ, but the Law.) This being so, you may easily apprehend that it must needs abate very much of the Terrour, which would else have been unavoydable. If you had read or heard that you were a sinner, and the Child of Hell and of Gods wrath, and that there was no Remedy (which is such a Preaching of the Law, as we must not use to any in the world, nor any since the first promise to *Adam* must receive;) Yea or if you had heard Nothing of a Saviour for a year, or a day, or an hour after you had heard that you were an Heir of Hell; and so the Remedy had been but Concealed from you; though not denied (which ordinarily must not be done) then you might in all likelyhood have found some more terrours of soul that hour. But when you heard that your sin was pardonable as soon as you heard that you were a sinner, and heard that your Misery had a sufficient Remedy provided, if

you would accept it, or at leaſt that it was not Remedileſs, and this as ſoon as you heard of that miſery, what wonder is it if this exceedingly abate your fears and troubles! Suppoſe two men go to viſit two ſeveral Neighbours that have the Plague, and One of them ſaith, *It is the Plague that is on you; you are but a Dead man*: The other ſaith to the other ſick perſon, *It is the Plague that you have; but here is our Phyſician at the next door that hath a Receipt that will cure it as Infallibly and as eaſily as if it were but the prick of a pin; he hath cured thouſands and never fail'd one that took his Receipt: but if you will not ſend to him, and truſt him, and take his Receipt there is no hopes of you.* Tell me now whether the firſt of theſe ſick perſons be not like to be more troubled then the other? and whether it will not remove almoſt all the fears and troubles of the latter to hear of a Certain Remedy as ſoon as he heareth of the diſeaſe? though ſome trouble he muſt needs have to think that he hath a diſeaſe in it ſelf ſo deſperate or loathſome. Nay, let me tell you, ſo the Cure be but well done, the leſs Terrours and deſpairing fears you were put upon, the more Credit is it to your Phyſician and his Apothecary, Chriſt and the Preacher or Inſtrument that did the work: and therefore you ſhould rather praiſe your Phyſician, then queſtion the Cure. DOUBT.

DOUBT III.

BUT it is common with all the World to consent to the Religion that they are bred up in, and somewhat affected with it, and to make Conscience of obeying the precepts of it: so do the Jews in theirs: the Mahometans in theirs: And I fear it is no other Work on my soul but the meer force of Education, that maketh me Religious, and that I had never that great Renewing Work of the Spirit upon my soul; and so that all my Religion is but meer Opinion, or Notions in my Brain.

ANSWER.

1. ALL the Religions in the world, besides the Christian Religion, have either much errour and wickedness mixt with some Truth of God, or they contain some lesser parcel of that Truth alone (as the Jews) Onely the Christian Religion hath that whole Truth which is saving. Now so much of Gods Truth as there is in any of these Religions, so much it may work Good effects upon their souls; as the knowledge of the Godhead, and that God is Holy, Good, Just, Merciful, and that he sheweth them much undeserved Mercy in his daily

providences, &c. But mark these two things, 1. That all persons of false Religions do more easily and greedily embrace the false part of their Religion then the true; and those they are zealous for, and practice with all their might, because their natural corruption doth befriend it, and is as combustible fewel for the fire of Hell to catch in: but that Truth of God which is mixt with their Error, if it be practical, they fight against it, and abhor it while they hold it, because it crosseth their lusts: insomuch that it is usually but some few of the more convinced and civil that God in providence maketh the main Instruments of continuing those Truths of his in that part of the wicked world: For we finde that even among Pagans the Prophaner and more sensual sort did deride the better sort, as our prophane Christians do the godly whom they called Puritans. 2. Note, that the Truth of God which in these false Religions is still acknowledged, is so small a part and so oppressed by Errors, that it is not sufficient to their salvation (that is, to give them any sound Hope) nor is it sufficient to make such clear and deep and powerful Impressions in their mindes as may make them Holy or truly Heavenly, or may overcome in them the Interest of the world and the flesh.

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This being ſo, you may ſee great reaſon, why a Turk or a Heathen may be zealous for his Religion without Gods Spirit, or any true Sanctification, when yet you cannot be ſo truly zealous for yours without it. Indeed the ſpeculative part of our Religion, ſeparated from the Practical, or from the hard and ſelf denying part of the Practical, many a wicked man may be zealous for: as to maintain the Godhead, or that God is merciful, &c. or to maintain againſt the Jews that Jeſus is the Chriſt, or againſt the Turks that he is the only Redeemer and Teacher of the Church, or againſt the Papiſts that all the Chriſtians in the world are Chriſts Church as well as the Romans; and againſt the Socinians and Arrians, that Chriſt is God, &c. But this is but a ſmal part of our Religion: nor doth this, or any heatheniſh Zeal, ſanctifie the heart, or truly mortifie the fleſh, or overcome the world. They may contemn Life and caſt it away for their Pride and Vainglory: but not for the hopes of a holy and bleſſed Life with God. This is but the prevalency of one corruption againſt another, or rather of vice againſt nature. There is a common Grace of God that goeth along with common Truths, and according to the meaſure of their obedience to the Truth, ſuch was the change it wrought; which was done

done by common Truths, and common Grace together, but not by their false mixtures at all. But God hath annexed his special Grace only to the special Truths of the Gospel or Christian-Religion. If therefore God do by common Grace work a great change on a Heathen by the means of common Truths, and do by his special Grace work a greater and special change on you, by the means of the special truths of the Gospel, have you any reason hereupon to suspect your condition? or should you not rather both admire that providence and common Grace which is manifested without the Church, and humbly, rejoycingly and thankfully embrace that special saving Grace which is manifested to your self above them?

2. And for that which you speak of *Education*, you have as much cause to doubt of your conversion, because it was wrought by publike preaching, as because it was wrought by Education. For 1. Both are by the Gospel: For it is the Gospel that your Parents taught you, as well as which the Preacher teacheth you. 2 I have shewed you, that if Parents did not shamefully neglect their duties, the Word Publikely preached would not be the ordinary instrument of Regeneration to the Children of true Christians, but would onely build them up, and direct them in

in the faith, and in obedience. The proof is very plain: If we ſhould ſpeak nothing of the Intereſt of our Infants in the Covenant-Grace upon the Conditional force of their Parents faith, nor of their Baptiſm: yet *Deut.* 6. & *Eph.*6. and oft in the *Proverbs* you may finde that it is Gods ſtrict Command that Parents ſhould teach Gods word to their Children, and bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord; yea with a prediction or half promiſe, that if we train up a childe in the way he ſhould go, when he is old he ſhall not depart from it, *Prov.*22.6. Now its certain that God will uſually bleſs that which he appointeth to be the uſual means, if it be rightly uſed: For he hath appointed no means to be uſed in vain.

I hope therefore by this time you ſee, that in ſtead of being troubled that the work was done on your ſoul by the means of Education, 1. You had more Reaſon to be troubled if it had been done firſt by the publike Preaching of the word: For it ſhould grieve you at the heart to think, 1. That you lived in an unregenerate ſtate ſo long, and ſpent your childehood in vanity and ſin, and thought not ſeriouſly on God and your ſalvation, for ſo many years together. 2. And that you or your Parents ſin ſhould provoke God ſo long to withdraw his Spirit & deny you his Grace.

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2. You may see also what unconceiveable thanks you owe to God, who made Education the means of your early change. 1. In that he prevented so many and grievous sins which else you would have been guilty of (And you may read in *Davids* and *Manasses* case, that even pardoned sins have oft-times very sad effects left behinde them.) 2. That you have enjoyed Gods Spirit and Love so much longer then else you would have done. 3. That iniquity took not so deep rooting in you, as by custom it would have done. 4. That the Devil cannot Glory of that service which you did him, as else he might: and that the Church is not so much the worse, as else it might have been by the mischief you would have done; and that you need not all your days look back with so much trouble, as else you must, upon the effects of your ill doing; nor with *Paul*, to think of one *Stephen*, yea many Saints in whose blood you first embrued your hands; and to cry out, *I was born out of due time: I am not worthy to be called a Christian, because I persecuted the Church of God: I was mad against them, and persecuted them into several Cities: I was sometime foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures.* Would you rather that God had permitted you to do this? 5. And me thinks it should be a comfort to you, that your own

Father

Father was the Instrument of your spiritual Good: that he that was the means of your Generation, was the means of your Regeneration: both because it will be a double comfort to your Parents, and because it will endear and engage you to them in a double bond. For my part, I know not what God did secretly in my heart before I had the use of memory and reason, but the first good that ever I felt on my soul, was from the Counsels and teachings of my own father in my childehood; and I take it now for a double mercy, being gladder that he was the Instrument to do me Good, then if it had been the best Preacher in the world: How foul an oversight is it then, that you should be troubled at one of the choicest mercies of your life, yea that your life was capable of, and for which you owe to God such abundant thanks!

DOUBT. IV.

But my great fear is, that the life of Grace is not yet within me, because I am so void of spiritual sense and feeling: Me thinks I am in spiritual things as Dead as a block, and my heart as hard as a Rock or the nether Mill-stone: Grace is a principle of new Life,

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and Life is a principle of ſenſe and motion: it cauſeth vigour and Activity; ſuch ſhould I have in Duty if I had the Life of Grace. But I feel the great curſe of a dead heart within me: God ſeems to withdraw his quickening Spirit, and to forſake me; and to give me up to the hardneſs of my heart. If I were in Covenant with him, I ſhould feel the bleſſing of the Covenant within me; The hard heart would be taken out of my body, and a heart of fleſh, a ſoft heart would be given to me: But I cannot weep one tear for my ſins. I can think on the blood of Chriſt, and of my bloody ſins that cauſed it, and all will not wring one tear from mine eyes: And therefore I fear that my ſoul is yet deſtitute of the life of Grace.

ANSWER.

1. A Soft heart conſiſteth in two things, 1. That the Will be perſwadable, tractable and yielding to God, and plyable to his will: 2. That the Affections or Paſſions be ſomewhat moved herewithal about ſpiritual things. Some degree more or leſs of the latter, doth concur with the former; but I have told you that it is the former wherein the heart and life of Grace doth lie. and that the latter is very various, and uncertain to try by.

by. Many do much overlook the Scripture-meaning of the word *Hard-heartedneſs*. Mark it up and down concerning the Iſraelites who are ſo oft charged by *Moſes*, *David*, *Iſaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and other Prophets, to be hard-hearted, or to harden their hearts, or ſtiffen their necks; and you will finde that the moſt uſual meaning of the Holy Ghoſt is this; They were an intractable, diſobedient, obſtinate people: or as the Greek word in the New Teſtament ſignifieth, which we often tranſlate *Unbelieving*, they were an *Unperſwadable* people: no ſaying would ſerve them. They ſet light by Gods Commands, Promiſes, and ſevereſt Threatnings, and Judgements themſelves: nothing would move them to forſake their ſins and obey the voyce of God. You ſhall finde that hardneſs of heart is ſeldom put for want of tears, or a melting weeping diſpoſition; and never at all for the want of ſuch tears, where the will is tractable and obedient. I pray you examine your ſelf then according to this Rule. God offereth his Love in Chriſt, and Chriſt with all his benefits to you: Are you willing to Accept them? He commandeth you to worſhip him, and uſe his ordinances, and Love his people, and others, and to forſake your known Iniquities, ſo far that they may not have dominion over you: Are you Willing

ling to this? He commandeth you to take him for your God, and Christ for your Redeemer, and stick to him for better and worse, and never forsake him. Are you willing to do this? If you have a stiff Rebellious heart, and will not Accept of Christ and Grace, and will rather let go Christ then the world, and will not be perswaded from your known iniquities, but are loth to leave them, and love not to be reformed, and will not set upon those duties, as you are able, which God requireth, and you are fully convinced of, then are you Hard-hearted in the Scripture sense. But if you are glad to have Christ with all your heart upon the terms that he is offered to you in the Gospel, and you do walk daily in the way of duty as you can, and are willing to Pray, and willing to hear and wait on God in his Ordinances, and willing to have all Gods Graces formed within you, and willing to let go your profitablest and sweetest sins, and it is your daily desires, O that I could seek God, and do his will more faithfully, zealously and pleasingly then I do! O that I were rid of this body of sin! these carnal, corrupt and worldly inclinations, and that I were as holy as the best of Gods Saints on earth! And if when it comes to practise, whether you should obey or no, though some unwillingness to duty and willingness

willingneſs to ſin be in you, you are offended at it, and the greater bent of your Will is for God, and it is but the leſſer which is towards ſin, and therefore the world and fleſh do not lead you captive, and you live not wilfully in avoidable ſins, nor at all in groſs ſin: I ſay, if it be thus with you, then you have the Bleſſing of a ſoft heart, a heart of fleſh, a new heart; for it is a Willing obedient tractable heart, oppoſed to obſtinacy in ſin, which Scripture calleth a ſoft heart. And then for the Paſſionate part, which conſiſteth in lively feelings of ſin, miſery, mercy, &c. and in weeping for ſin, I ſhall ſay but this; 1. Many an unſanctified perſon hath very much of it, which yet are deſperately Hard-hearted ſinners. It dependeth far more on the temper of the body, then of the Grace in the ſoul: Women uſually can weep eaſily (and yet not all) and children, and old men. Some complexions encline to it, and others not: Many can weep at a Paſſion-Sermon, or any moving duty, and yet will not be perſwaded to obedience: theſe are hard-hearted ſinners for all their tears. 2. Many a tender godly perſon cannot weep for ſin; partly through the temper of their minds, which are more judicious and ſolid, and leſs paſſionate, but moſtly from the temper of their bodies, which diſpoſe them not

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that way. 3. Deepeſt ſorrows ſeldom cauſe tears, but deep thoughts of heart: as greateſt joys ſeldom cauſe laughter, but inward pleaſure. I'le tell you how you ſhall know whoſe heart is truly ſorrowful for ſin and tender: He that would be at the greateſt coſt or pains to be rid of ſin, or that he had not ſinned. You cannot weep for ſin: but you would give all that you have to be rid of ſin; you could wiſh when you diſhonoured God by ſin, that you had ſpent that time in ſuffering rather; and if it were to do again on the ſame terms and inducements, you would not do it: Nay, you would live a beggar condtendedly, ſo you might fully pleaſe God, and never ſin againſt him; and are content to pinch your fleſh and deny your worldly intereſt for the time to come, rather then wilfully diſobey. This is a truly tender heart. On the other ſide, another can weep to think of his ſin; and yet if you ſhould ask him, what wouldſt thou give, or what wouldſt thou ſuffer, ſo thou hadſt not ſinned? or that thou mighteſt ſin no more? Alas, very little: For the next time that he is put to it, he will rather venture on the ſin, then venture on a little loſs, or danger, or diſgrace in the world, or deny his craving fleſh its pleaſures. This is a hard-hearted ſinner. The more you would part with to be

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rid of sin, or the greater cost you would be at for that end, the more Repentance have you, and true tenderness of heart. Alas, if men should go to Heaven according to their weeping, what abundance of children and women would be there for one man! I'le speak truly my own Case. This doubt lay heavy many a year on my own soul: when yet I would have given all that I had to be rid of sin; but I could not weep a tear for it. Nor could I weep for the death of my dearest friends, when yet I would have bought their lives, had it been Gods will, at a dearer rate then many that could weep for them ten times as much. And now since my nature is decayed, and my body languisheth in consuming weakness, and my head more moistned, and my veins filled with flegmatick watry blood, now I can weep: and yet I find never the more tender-heartedness in my self then before. And yet to this day so much remains of my old disposition, that I could wring all the money out of my purse easier then one tear out of my eyes, to save a friend, or rescue them from evil: when I see divers that can weep for a dead friend, that would have been at no great cost to save their lives. 5. Besides, as Dr. *Sibs* saith, There is oft sorrow for sin in us, when it

it doth not appear: It wanteth but ſome quickening word to ſet it afoot. It is the nature of Grief to break out into tears moſt, when ſorrow hath ſome vent, either when we uſe ſome expoſtulating aggravating terms with our ſelves, or when we are opening our hearts and caſe to a friend: then ſorrow will often ſhew it ſelf, that did not before. 6. Yet do I not deny but that our want of Tears and tender Affections and heart-meltings, are our ſins: For my part, I ſee exceeding Cauſe to bewail it greatly in my ſelf, that my ſoul is not raiſed to a higher pitch of tender ſenſibility of all ſpiritual things, then it is: and I doubt not but it ſhould be the matter of our daily confeſſion and complaint to God, that our hearts are ſo dull and little affected with his ſacred Truths, and our own ſins: But this is the ſcope of all my Speech, Why do not you diſtinguiſh between Matter of Sorrow and Matter of Doubting? No queſtion but you ſhould lament your dulneſs and ſtupidity, and uſe all Gods means for the quickening of your Affections, and to get the moſt lively frame of ſoul: but muſt it cauſe you to doubt of your ſincerity when you cannot obtain this? Then will you never have a ſetled Peace or Aſſurance for many days together, for ought I know. I would ask you but this: Whether you are willing or unwilling

ling of all that hardneſs, inſenſibleneſs and dulneſs which you complain of? If you are willing of it, what makes you complain of it? If you are unwilling, it ſeems your will is ſo far ſound; and it is the Will that is the ſeat of the Life of Grace which we muſt try by: And was not *Pauls* Caſe the ſame with yours? *Rom.* 7. 19. when he ſaith, *The Good which I Would do, I do not?* and; *When I Would do Good, Evil is preſent with me.* I know *Paul* ſpeaks not of groſs ſins, but ordinary Infirmities: and I have told you before, that the Livelineſs and Senſibility of the Paſſions or Affections, is a thing that the Will, though ſanctified, cannot fully command or excite at its pleaſure. A ſanctified man cannot Grieve or Weep for ſin when he will, or ſo much as he will: he cannot Love, Joy, be Zealous, &c. when he will: He may be truly Willing, and not Able: And is not this your Caſe? And doth not *Paul* make it the Caſe of all Chriſtians? *Gal.* 5. 17. *The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary one to the other, ſo that we cannot do the things that we Would.* Take my Counſel therefore in this, if you love not ſelf-deceiving and diſquietneſs. Search whether you can ſay unfeignedly, *I would with all my heart have Chriſt and his quickening and ſanctifying Spirit,*

rit, and his softning Grace, to bring my hard heart to Tenderness, and my dull and blockish soul to a lively frame! O that I could attain it! And if you can truly say thus, Bless God that hath given you saving sincerity: And then let all the rest of your Dulness, and Deadness, and Hard-heartedness be matter of daily sorrow to you, and spare not, so it be in Moderation, but let it be no matter of Doubting. Confess it, complain of it, pray against it, and strive against it: but do not deny Gods Graces in you for it.

And here let me mind you of one thing; That it is a very ill distemper of spirit when a man can mourn for nothing, but what Causeth him to Doubt of his salvation: It is a great Corruption, if when your Doubts are Resolved, and you are perswaded of your salvation, if then you cease all your humiliation and sorrow for your sin: For you must sorrow that you have in you such a body of Death, and that which is so displeasing to God, and are able to please and enjoy him no more, though you were never so Certain of the pardon of sin and of salvation.

7. Lastly, let me ask you one Question more: What is the reason that you are so troubled for want of Tears for your sin? Take heed lest there lie some Corruption in this trouble that you do not discern. If it

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be onely becauſe your deadneſs and dulneſs is your ſin, and you would fain have your ſoul in that frame, in which it may be fitteſt to pleaſe God and enjoy him: then I commend and encourage you in your trouble. But take heed leſt you ſhould have any conceit of a Meritoriouſneſs in your Tears; for that would be a more dangerous ſin then your want of Tears. And if it be for want of a ſign of Grace, and becauſe a dry eye is a ſign of an unregenerate ſoul; I have told you, It is not ſo, except where it onely ſeconds an impenitent heart, and comes from, or accompanieth an unrenewed Will, and a prevailing unwillingneſs to turn to God by Chriſt. Shew me, if you can, where the Scripture ſaith, He that cannot Weep for ſin, ſhall not be Saved, or hath no true Grace? Is not your complaint in this the very ſame that the eminenteſt Chriſtians have uſed in all times? That moſt Bleſſed, holy man, Mr. *Bradford*, who ſacrificed his life in the flames againſt Romiſh abominations, was wont to ſubſcribe his Spiritual Letters (endited by the breath of the Spirit of God) thus: *The moſt miſerable Hard-hearted ſinner*, John Bradford.

DOUBT V.

OBut I am not willing to Good; and therefore I fear that even my will it self is yet unchanged: I have such a backwardness and indispositions to Duty, especially secret Prayer, Meditation, and self-examination, and reproving and exhorting sinners, that I am fain to force my self to it against my will. It is no Delight that I find in these Duties that brings me to them, but onely I use violence with my self, and am fain to pull my self down on my knees, because I know it is a Duty, and I cannot be saved without it: but I am no sooner on my knees, but I have a motion to rise, or be short, and am weary of it, and find no great miss of duty when I do omit it.

ANSWER.

1. THis shews that your soul is sick when your meat goes so much against your stomack that you are fain to force it down: And sickness may well cause you to complain to God and man. But what's this to Deadness! The Dead cannot force down their meat, nor digest it at all. It seems by this tha

that you are ſanctified but in a low Degree, and your Corruption remains in ſome ſtrength; and let that be your ſorrow, and the overcoming of it be your greateſt care and buſineſs: But ſhould you therefore ſay that you are unſanctified? It ſeems that you have ſtill the fleſh luſting againſt the ſpirit, that you cannot do the Good you would: when you would pray with Delight and unweariedneſs, the fleſh draws back, and the Devil is hindering you. And is it not ſo in too great a meaſure with the beſt on earth? Remember what Chriſt ſaid to his own Apoſtles, when they ſhould have done him one of their laſt Services, as to the attendance of his body on earth, and ſhould have comforted him in his Agony, they are all aſleep: Again and again he comes to them, and findeth them aſleep: Chriſt is Praying and ſweating blood, and they are ſtill ſleeping, though he warned them to watch and Pray that they enter not into Temptation. But what doth God ſay to them for it? Why he uſeth this ſame Diſtinction between Humiliation for ſin, and Doubting of ſincerity and ſalvation, and he helps them to the former, and helps them againſt the latter; *Could ye not watch with me one hour?* ſaith he. There he convinceth them of the ſin, that they may be humbled for it. *The ſpirit indeed is willing,*

but the flesh is weak, saith he. There he utterly resisteth their Doubtings, or preventeth them; shewing them wherein sincere Grace consisteth, even in the spirits willingness; and telling them that they had that Grace; and then telling them whence came their sin, even from the weakness of the flesh.

2. I have shewed you, that as every mans Will is but partly sanctified (as to the Degree of holiness) and so far as it is imperfect, it will be unwilling; so that there is something in the Duties of secret Prayer, Meditation and Reproof, which makes most men more backward to them then other duties. The last doth so cross our fleshly Interests; and the two former are so spiritual, and require so pure and spiritual a soul, and set a man so immediatly before the living God, as if we were speaking to him face to face, and have nothing of external pomp to draw us, that it is no wonder, if while there is flesh within us, we are backward to them! especially while we are so unacquainted with God, and while strangeness and consciousness of sin doth make us draw back: Besides that the Devil will more busily hinder us here then anywhere.

3. The Question therefore is not whether you have an unwillingness & backwardness to Good?

Good? for so have all: Nor yet whether you have any cold uneffectual wishes? for so have the ungodly: But whether your Willingness be not more then your unwillingness? And in that, 1. It must not be in every single act of duty; for a godly man may be actually more unwilling to a duty at this particular time, then willing; and thereupon may omit it: but it must be about your Habitual Willingness, manifested in ordinary actual Willingness. 2. You must not exclude any of those Motives which God hath given you to make you willing to Duty: He hath Commanded it; and his Authority should move you: He hath Threatned you; and therefore Fear should move you: Or else he would never have Threatned. He hath made Promises of Reward, and therefore the Hope of that should move. And therefore you may perceive here what a dangerous mistake it is to think that we have no Grace, except our Willingness to Duty be without Gods Motives, from a meer Love to the Duty it self, or to its effect. Nay, it is a dangerous Antinomian mistake to imagine that it is our duty to be Willing to Good without these Motives of God; I say, To take it so much as for our Duty to exclude Gods Motives, though we should not judge of our Grace by it. For it is but an

Accusation of Christ (and his Law) who hath ordained these Motives of Punishment and Reward, to be his Instruments to move the soul to duty. Let me therefore put the right Question to you; *Whether all Gods Motives laid together and considered, the ordinary prevailing part of your Will be not rather for Duty then against it?* This you will know by your practice. For if the prevailing part be against Duty, you will not do it: If it be for Duty, you will ordinarily perform it, though you cannot do it so well as you would. And then you may see that your backwardness and remaining unwillingness must still be matter of Humiliation and resistance to you, but not matter of Doubting. Nay thank God that enableth you to pull down your self on your knees when you are unwilling: For what is that but the prevailing of your willingness against your unwillingness? Should your unwillingness once prevail, you would turn your back upon the most acknowledged Duties.

DOUBT

DOUBT. VI.

BUt I am afraid that it is onely ſlaviſh fear of Hell, and not the Love of God, that cauſeth me to obey: and if it were not for this fear, I doubt whether I ſhould not quite give over all. And perfect Love caſteth out fear.

ANSWER.

I Have anſwered this already. Love will not be perfect in this life. In the life to come it will caſt out all fear of damnation: and all fear that drives the ſoul from God, and all fear of men (which is meant in *Rev.* 21. 8. where the fearful and unbelievers are condemned; that is, thoſe that fear men more then God) And that 1 *John* 4. 17, 18. ſpeaketh of a Tormenting Fear, which is it that I am perſwading you from, and conſiſteth in Terrors of ſoul upon an apprehenſion that God will condemn you; But it ſpeaketh not of a filial fear, nor of a fear leſt we ſhould by forſaking God, or by yielding to Temptation, loſe the Crown of Life, and ſo periſh: as long as this is not a tormenting

menting fear, but a cautelous, preserving, preventing fear. Besides the Text plainly saith, *It is that we may have boldness in the day of judgement, that Love casteth out this fear*: And at that day of Judgement, Love will have more fully overcome it. It is a great mistake to think that Filial Fear is onely the fear of temporal chastisement, and that all fear of Hell is slavish. Even Filial Fear is a Fear of Hell: But with this difference. A son (if he know himself to be a Son) hath such a perswasion of his Fathers Love to him, that he knows he will not cast him off, except he should be so vile as to renounce his Father; which he is moderately fearful or careful lest by Temptation he should be drawn to do, but not distrustfully fearful, as knowing the helps and mercies of his Father. But a slavish Fear is, when a man having no apprehensions of Gods love, or willingness to shew him mercy, doth look that God should deal with him as a slave, and destroy him when ever he doth amiss. It is this slavish Tormenting fear which I spend all this writing against. But yet a great deal even of this slavish fear may be in those sons, that know not themselves to be sons.

But suppose you were out of all fear of Damnation! do not belye your own heart, and tell me, Had you not rather be Holy

then

then Unholy? pleasing to God, then displeasing? and would not the Hope of Salvation draw you from sin to duty, without the fear of Damnation in Hell? But you will say, That is still Mercenary, and as bad as slavish fears. I answer, Not so, This Hope of Salvation, is the Hope of enjoying God, and living in perfect Pleasingness to him, and pleasure in him in Glory; And the Desire of this is a Desire of Love: It is Love to God that makes you Desire him, and Hope to enjoy him.

Lastly I say again, Take heed of separating what God hath joyned. If God, by putting in your nature the several Passions of Hope, Fear. Love &c. and by putting a Holiness into these Passions, by sanctifying Grace, and by putting both Promises and dreadful Threatnings into his word; I say, if God by all these means hath given you several motives to obedience, take heed of separating them: Do not once ask your heart such a question, Whether it would obey if there were no Threatning, and so no Fear. Nor on the other side, do not let Fear do all, without Love. Doubtless the more Love constraineth to duty, the better it is: and you should endeavour with all your might that you might feel more of the force of Love in your duties: But do you not mark how you

cherish that Corruption that you complain of? Your Doubts and Tormenting Fears are the things that Love should cast out. Why then do you entertain them? If you say, I cannot help it: why then do you cherish them? and own them? and plead and dispute for them? and say you do well to Doubt, and you have Cause? Will this ever cast out Tormenting Fears? Do you not know that the way to cast them out, is not to maintain them by distrustful thoughts or words, but to see their sinfulness, and abhor them, and to get more high thoughts of the Lovingkindness of God, and the tender mercies of the Redeemer, and the unspeakable Love that he hath manifested in his sufferings for you, that so the Love of God may be more advanced and powerful in your soul, and may be able to cast out your Tormenting Fears. Why do you not do this instead of Doubting? If Tormenting Fears and Doubtings be a sin, why do you not make Conscience of them? and bewail it that you have been so guilty of them? Will you therefore Doubt because you have slavish fears? Why that is to Doubt because you Doubt; and to Fear because you Fear; and so to sin still because you have sinned. Consider well of the folly of this course.

DOUBT VII.

BUT I am not able to Believe: and without Faith there is no pleasing God, nor hope of salvation. I fear Unbelief will be my ruine.

ANSWER.

1. I Have answered this Doubt fully before. It is grounded on a Mistake of the Nature of true Faith. You think that Faith is the Believing that you are in Gods favour, and that you are Justified: but properly this is no Faith at all, but onely Assurance, which is sometimes a fruit of Faith, and sometimes never in this life obtained by a Believer. Faith consisteth of two parts; 1. Assent to the Truth of the Word. 2. Acceptance of Christ as he is offered; Which immediatly produceth a Trusting on Christ for salvation, and a Consent to be Governed by him, and Resolution to obey him; which in the fullest sense are also acts of Faith. Now do not you Believe the truth of the Gospel? And do you not Accept of Christ as he is offered therein? If you are truly willing to have Christ

Christ as he is offered, I dare say you are a true Believer. If you be not willing, for shame never complain. Men use rather to speak against those that they are unwilling of, then complain of their absence, and that they cannot enjoy them.

2. However, seeing you complain of unbelief, in the Name of God do not cherish it, and plead for it, and by your own cogitations fetch in daily matter to feed it: but do more in detestation of it, as well as complain.

DOUBT VIII.

BUT I am a stranger to the Witness of the Spirit, and the Joy of the Holy Ghost, and Communion with God; and therefore how can I be a true Believer?

ANSWER.

1. FEeding your Doubts and Perplexities, and arguing for them, is not a means to get the Testimony and Joy of the Spirit: but rather studying with all Saints to know the Love of Christ which passeth knowledge, to comprehend the height, and bredth, and length

length, and depth of his Love: and seeking to understand the things that are given you of God. Acknowledge Gods general Love to Mankind, both in his Gracious Nature, and Common Providences, and Redemption by Christ, and deny not his Special Mercies to your self, but dwell in the study of the Riches of Grace, and that's the way to come to the Joy of the Holy Ghost. 2. I have told you before what the witness of the Spirit is, and what is the ordinary mistake herein. If you have the Graces and holy operations of the Spirit, you have the witness of the Spirit, whether you know it or not. 3. If by your own doubtings you have deprived your self of the Joy of the Holy Ghost, bewail it, and do so no more; but do not therefore say you have not the Holy Ghost. For the Holy Ghost often works Regeneration and Holiness, before he works any sensible Joys. 4. You have some hope of salvation by Christ left in you: You be not yet in utter despair: And is it no Comfort to you to think that you have yet any Hope? and are not quite past all Remedy? It may be your sorrows may so cloud it that you take no notice of it: but I know you cannot have the least Hope without some answerable Comfort. And may not that Comfort be truly the Joy of the Holy Ghost? 5. And for Communion with

God,

God, let me ask you: Have you no recourse to him by Prayer in your straits? Do you not wait at his mouth for the Law and direction of your life? Have you received no holy desires, or other Graces from him? Nay, are you sure that you are not a member of Christ, who is one with him? How can you then say, that you have no Communion with him? Can there be Communication of Prayer, and Obedience from you? yea your own self delivered up to Christ? and a Communication of any life of Grace from God, by Christ and the Spirit? and all this without Communion? It cannot be. Many a soul hath most near Communion with Christ that knows it not.

DOUBT IX.

I Have not the spirit of prayer: When I should pour out my soul to God, I have neither bold access, nor matter of Prayer nor Words.

ANSWER.

DO you know what the spirit of Prayer is? It containeth, 1. Desires of the soul

soul after the things we want, especially Christ and his Graces. 2. An addressing our selves to God with these Desires, that we may have help and relief from him. Have not you both these? Do you not Desire Christ and Grace, Justification and Sanctification? Do you not look to God as him who alone is able to supply your wants, and bids you ask that you may receive? Do you utterly despair of help, and so seek to none? Or do you make your addresses by Prayer to any but God? But perhaps you look at words, and matter to dilate upon, that you may be able to hold out in a long speech to God, and you think that is the effect of the spirit of Prayer. But where do you find that in Gods Word? I confess that in many, and most, the spirit which helpeth to Desires, doth also help to some kind of expressions: Because if a man be of able natural parts, and have a tongue to express his own mind, the promoting of holy Desires will help men to expressions. For a full soul is hardly hindred from venting it self: And experience teacheth us, that the spirits enflaming the heart with holy Affections, doth very much furnish both the Invention and Expression. But this is but accidental and uncertain: For those that are either men of unready tongues, or that are so ill bred among the

rude

rude vulgar, that they want fit expressions of their own minds, or that are of over-bashful dispositions, or especially that are of small knowledge, and of little and short acquaintance with those that should teach them to pray by their examples, or that have been but of short standing in the School of Christ, such a man may have the spirit of Prayer many a year, and never be able in full expressions of his own to make known his wants to God: no, nor in good and tolerable sense and language, before others to speak to God, from his own Invention. A man may know all those Articles of the Faith that are of flat necessity to Salvation, and yet not be able to find matter or words for the opening of his heart to God at length. I would advise such, to frequent the Company of those that can teach and help them in Prayer, and neglect not to use the smallest parts they have, especially in secret between God and their own souls, where they need not so much as in publick to be regardful of expressions: and in the mean time to learn a Prayer from some Book, that may fitliest express their necessities; or to use the Book it self in Prayer, if they distrust their memories: not resolving to stick here, and make it a means of indulging their laziness and negligence, much less to reproach and deride those

those that express their desires to God from the present sense of their own wants (as some wickedly do deride such:) but to use this lawful help till they are able to do better without it then with it, and then to lay it by, and not before. The Holy Ghost is said, *Rom.* 8. 16. to help our Infirmities in Prayer: but how? 1. By teaching us what to pray for: not always what matter or words to enlarge our selves by; but what necessary Graces to pray for. 2. By giving us Sighs and Groans unexpressible: which is far from giving Copious expressions: For Groans and Sighs be not words: and if they be Groans that we cannot express, it would rather seem to intimate a want of expression, then a constant abounding therein, where the spirit doth assist: Though indeed the meaning is, that the Groans are so deep, that they are past the expression of our words: All our speech cannot express that deep sense that is in our hearts. For the Understanding hath the advantage of the Affections herein: All the thoughts of the mind may be expressed to others; but the Feelings and fervent Passions of the soul can be but very defectively expressed.

Lastly, All have not the spirit of Prayer in like measure: nor all that have it in a great measure at one time, can find it so at pleasure,

pleasure. Desires rise and fall, and these earnest Groans be not in every Prayer where the Holy Ghost doth assist. I believe there is never a Prayer that ever a Believer did put up to God for things lawful and useful, but it was put up by the help of the Spirit. For the weakest Prayer hath some degree of good Desire in it, and addresses to God with an endeavour to express them: and these can come from none but onely from the Spirit: Meer words without desires are no more Prayer, then a suit of apparel hang'd on a stake is a man. You may have the Spirit of Prayer, and yet have it in a very weak degree.

Yet still I would encourage you to bewail your defect herein as your sin, and seek earnestly the supply of your wants: But what's that to the questioning or denying your sincerity, or right to salvation?

DOUBT X.

I Have no Gifts to make me useful to my self or others. When I should profit by the Word, I cannot Remember it: When I should Reprove a Sinner, or Instruct the Ignorant, I have not words: If I were called to give an account of my Faith, I have not words to express that which

which is in my mind: And what Grace can here be then?

ANSWER.

THis needs no long Answer. Lament and amend those sins by which you have been disabled. But know, that these Gifts depend more on Nature, Art, Industry and Common Grace, then upon special saving Grace. Many a bad man is excellent in all these, and many a one that is truly godly is defective. Where hath God laid our salvation upon the strength of our Memories, the Readiness of our Tongues, or measure of the like Gifts? That were almost as if he should have made a Law, that all shall be saved that have sound Complexions, and healthful and youthful bodies; and all be damned that are sickly, aged, weak, children, and most women.

DOUBT

DOUBT. XI.

O But I have been a grievous sinner, before I came home, and have fallen foully since; and I am utterly unworthy of Mercy! Will the Lord ever save such an unworthy wretch as I? will he ever give his Mercy and the blood of his Son, to one that hath so abused it?

ANSWER.

1. THe Question is not, with God, what you have been, but what you are? God takes men as they then are, and not as they were. 2. It is a dangerous thing to object the greatness of your Guilt against Gods mercy and Christs Merits! Do you think Christs satisfaction is not sufficient? or that he dyed for small sins and not for great? Do you not know that he hath made satisfaction for all, and will pardon all, and hath given out the pardon of all in his Covenant, and that to all men, on Condition they will Accept Christ to pardon and heal them in his own way? Hath God made it his great design in the work of mans Redemption,

demption, to make his Love and Mercy as Honorable and wonderful, as he did his Power in the work of Creation? and wil you after all this oppose the greatness of your sins against the greatness of this Mercy and Satisfaction? why, you may as wel think your self to be such a one that God could not or did not Make you, as to think your sins so great that Christ could not or did not satisfie for them, or will not pardon them, if you Repent and Believe in him. 3. And for Worthiness, I pray you observe: There is a twofold Worthiness & Righteousness. There is a Legal Worthiness and Righteousness, which consisteth in a perfect obedience, which is the performance of the Conditions of the Law of Pure Nature and Works. This no man hath but Christ: and if you look after this Righteousness or Worthiness in your self, then do you depart from Christ, and make him to have dyed and satisfied in vain; you are a Jew and not a Christian, and are one of those that *Paul* so much disputeth against, that would be Justified by the Law. Nay you must not so much as once imagine that all your own Works can be any part of this Legal Righteousness or Worthiness to you. Only Christs Satisfaction and Merit is in stead of this our Legal Righteousness and Worthiness. God never gave Christ and Mercy to any but the unworthy in this

sense:

ſenſe: If you know not your ſelf to be unworthy and unrighteous in the ſenſe of the Law of Works, you cannot know what Chriſts Righteouſneſs is. Did Chriſt come to ſave any but ſinners, and ſuch as were loſt? what need you a Saviour, if you were not Condemned? and how come you to be condemned if you were not unrighteous and unworthy. But then 2. there is an Evangelical perſonal Worthineſs and Righteouſneſs, which is the Condition on which God beſtows Chriſts Righteouſneſs upon us: and this all have that will be ſaved by Chriſt. But what is that? Why it hath two parts: 1. The Condition and Worthineſs required to your Union with Chriſt and pardon of all your ſins paſt, and your Adoption and Juſtification; it is no more but *your hearty thankful Acceptance of the Gift that is freely Given you of God by his Covenant-grant, that is, Chriſt and Life in him*, 1 John 5.10,11,12. There is no worthineſs required in you before Faith as a Condition on which God will give you Faith: but onely certain means you are appointed to uſe for the obtaining it: And Faith it ſelf is but the Acceptance of a free Gift. God requireth you not to bring any other Worthineſs or Price in your hands; but that you conſent unfeignedly to have Chriſt as he is offered, and to the ends and uſes that he

is

is offered: that is, as one that hath satisfied for you by his blood and merits, to put away your sins, and as one that must illuminate and Teach you, Sanctifie and Guide and Govern you by his Word and Spirit; and as King and Judge will fully and finally Justifie you at the day of Judgement, and give you the Crown of Glory. Christ on his part 1. Hath merited your pardon by his satisfaction, and not properly by his sanctifying you: 2. And sanctifieth you by his Spirit, and Ruleth you by his Laws, and not directly by his bloodshed: 3. And he will justifie you at Judgement as King and Judge, and not as Satisfier or Sanctifier: But the Condition on your part of obtaining Interest in Christ and his benefits, is that our Faith which accepteth him in all these respects (both as King, Priest and Teacher) and to all these ends conjunctly. But then 2. The Condition and Worthyness required to the Continuation and Consummation of your Pardon, Justification, and right to Glory, is both the Continuance of your faith, and your sincere obedience, even your keeping the Baptismal Covenant that you made with Christ by your Parents, and the Covenant which you in your own person made with him in your first true Believing. These indeed are called *Worthiness and Righteousness* frequently

frequently in the Goſpel: but it is no worthineſs conſiſting in any ſuch works which make the Reward to be of Debt, and not of Grace (of which *Paul* ſpeaks) but onely in faith, and ſuch Goſpel works as *James* ſpeaks of which make the Reward to be wholly of Grace and not of Debt.

Now if you ſay you are unworthy in this Evangelical ſenſe, then you muſt mean (if you know what you ſay) that you are an Infidel or Unbeliever, or an Impenitent obſtinate Rebel that would not have Chriſt to reign over him: For the Goſpel calleth none Unworthy (as non-performers of its Conditions) but only theſe. But I hope you dare not charge your ſelf with ſuch Infidelity and wilful Rebellion.

DOUBT XII.

THough God hath kept me from Groſs ſins, yet I finde ſuch a ſearedneſs of Conſcience, and ſo little averſneſs from ſin in my minde; that I fear that I ſhould commit it if I lay under Temptations: and alſo that I ſhould not hold out in Tryal if I were called to ſuffer Death or any grievous Calamity. And that obedience which endureth meerly for want of a Temptation, is no true Obedience.

ANSWER.

ANSWER.

1. I Have fully answered this before. If you can overcome the temptations of Prosperity, you have no cause to doubt distrustfully whether you shall overcome the temptations of Adversity: And if God give you Grace to avoid Temptations to sin, and fly occasions as much as you can, and to overcome them, where you cannot avoid them; you have little reason to distrust his preservation of you, and your stedfastness thereby, if you should be cast upon greater Temptations. Indeed if you feel not such a Belief of the evil and danger of sinning, as to possess you with some sensible hatred of it, you have need to look to your heart for the strengthening of that Belief and Hatred: and fear your heart with a godly preserving Jealousie; but not with tormenting, disquieting doubts. Whatever your Passionate Hatred be, if you have a settled well-grounded Resolution, to walk in obedience to the death, you may confidently & comfortably trust him for your preservation, who gave you those resolutions.

2. And the last sentence of this Doubt, had need of great Caution, before you conclude it a certain Truth. Its true, that the Obedience which by an ordinary Temptation,

ſuch as men may expect, would be overthrown, is not well grounded and rooted before it is overthrown. But its a great Doubt whether there be not Degrees of Temptation Poſsible, which would overcome the Reſolution and Grace of the moſt Holy, having ſuch aſſiſtance as the Spirit uſually giveth Believers in Temptation? And whether ſome Temptations which overcome not a ſtrong Chriſtian, would not overcome a weak one, who yet hath true Grace? I conclude nothing of theſe Doubts. But I would not have you trouble your ſelf upon confident concluſions on ſo doubtful Grounds. This I am certain of, 1. That the ſtrongeſt Chriſtian ſhould take heed of Temptations, and not truſt to the ſtrength of his Graces, nor preſume on Gods preſervation while he wilfully caſteth himſelf in the mouth of dangers; nor to be encouraged hereunto upon any perſwaſion of an Impoſſibility of his falling away. O the falls, the fearful falls that I have known (alas, how often) the eminenteſt men for Godlineſs that ever I knew, to be Guilty of, by caſting themſelves upon Temptations. I confeſs I will never be confident of that mans perſeverance, were he the beſt that I know on earth, who caſteth himſelf upon violent Temptations, eſpecially the Temptations of Senſuality, Proſperity,

rity, and Seducement. 2. I know God hath taught us daily to watch and pray, that we enter not into Temptation; and to pray, *Lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from evil.* (I never understood the necessity of that Petition feelingly, till I saw the examples of these seven or eight years last past.) This being so, you must look that your perseverance should be by being preserved from Temptation; and must rather examine, Whether you have that Grace which will enable you to avoyd Temptations, then whether you have Grace enough to overcome them, if you rush into them. But if God unavoydably cast you upon them, keep up your Watch and Prayer, and you have no Cause to trouble your self with distrustful fears.

DOUBT XIII.

I *Am afraid lest I have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost: and then there is no hope of my salvation.*

ANSWER.

IT seems you know not what the sin against the Holy Ghost is; It is this, When a man is convinced that Christ and his Disciples did really work those glorious Miracles which are recorded in the Gospel, and yet will not Believe that Christ is the Son of God, and his Doctrine true, though sealed with all those Miracles and other holy and wonderful works of the Spirit, but do Blasphemously maintain that they were done by the Power of the Devil. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost: And dare you say that you are guilty of this? If you be, then you do not Believe that Christ is the Son of God, and the Messiah, and his Gospel true. And then you will sure oppose him, and maintain that he was a Deceiver; and that the Devil was the Author of all the Miraculous and Gracious workings of his Spirit. Then you will never fear his displeasure, nor call him seriously either Lord or Saviour! nor tender him any service, any more then you do to *Mahomet*. None but Infidels do commit the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: Nor but few of them. Unbelief is eminently called [*Sin*] in the Gospel: and

and that [*Unbelief*] which is maintained by Blaſpheming the Glorious Works of the Holy Ghoſt, which Chriſt and his Diſciples through many years time did perform for a Teſtimony to his Truth, that is called ſingularly [*The ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt!*] You may meet with other Deſcriptions of this ſin, which may occaſion your terrour: but I am fully perſwaded that this is the plain Truth.

DOUBT XIV.

BUT I greatly fear leſt the time of Grace be paſt: and leſt I have out-ſit the day of mercy, and now mercy hath wholly forſaken me. For I have oft heard Miniſters tell me from the Word: Now is the Accepted time: Now is the day of your viſitation: To day, while it is called to day, harden not your hearts, leſt God ſwear in his Wrath that you ſhall not enter into his Reſt. But I have ſtood out long after. I have reſiſted and quenched the Spirit, and now it is I fear departed from me.

ANSWER.

HEre is sufficient matter for Humiliation: but the Doubting ariseth meerly from Ignorance: The day of Grace may in two respects be said to be over: The first (and most properly so called) is, *When God will not Accept of a sinner, though he should Repent and Return.* This is never in this life for certain. And he that imagineth any such thing, as that it is too late while his soul is in his body, to Repent and Accept of Christ and Mercy, is meerly ignorant of the Tenour and sense of the Gospel: For the New Law of Grace doth limit no time on earth for Gods Accepting of a Returning sinner. True Faith and Repentance do as surely save at the last hour of the day, as at the first. God hath said, that whosoever Believeth in Christ, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. He hath no where excepted late Believers or Repenters: Shew any such Exception if you can.

2. The second sense in which it may be said that the day of Grace is over, is this: *When a man hath so long resisted the Spirit, that God hath given him over to wilful obstinate Refusals of Mercy, and of Christs Government, resolving*

resolving that he will never give him the prevailing Grace of his Spirit. Where note, 1. That this same man might still have Grace as soon as any other, if he were but Willing to Accept Christ, and Grace in him. 2. That no man can know of himself or any other, that God hath thus finally forsaken him: For God hath given us no sign to know it by; (at least who sin not against the Holy Ghost.) God hath not told us his secret intents concerning such. 4. Yet some men have far greater cause to fear it then others; especially those men, who under the most searching lively Sermons, do continue secure and wilful in known wickedness; either hating godliness and godly persons, and all that do Reprove them, or at least being stupified, that they feel no more then a Post the force of Gods terrours, or the sweetness of his promises; but make a jest of sinning, and think the life of godliness a needless thing. Especially if they grow old in this course, I confess such have great Cause to fear lest they are quite forsaken of God: For very few such are ever recovered. 5. And therefore it may well be said to all men, *To day if you will hear his voyce harden not your hearts, &c.* and, *This is the Acceptable time: this is the day of salvation*; both as this life is called, *The day of salvation*; and because

no man is certain to live another day, that he may Repent; nor yet to have Grace to Repent, if he Live. 6. But what's all this to you that do Repent? Can you have Cause to fear that your day of Grace is over, that have Received Grace? Why, that is as foolish a thing, as if a man should come to the Market, and buy Corn, and when he hath done, go home lamenting that the Market was past before he came? Or as a man should come and hear the Sermon, and when he hath done, lament that the Sermon was done before he came. If your day of Grace be past, tell me, (and do not wrong God) Where had you the Grace of Repentance? How came you by that Grace of holy Desires? Who made you Willing to have Christ for your Lord and Saviour? So that you had rather have him, and Gods favour, and a Holy heart and life, then all the glory of the World? How came you to desire that you were such a one as God would have you to be? and to desire that all your sins were dead, and might never live in you more? and that you were able to Love God, and Delight in him, and please him even in perfection? and that you are so troubled that you cannot do it? Are these signs that your day of Grace is over? Doth Gods Spirit breath out Groans after Christ and Grace, within you?

and

and yet is the day of Grace over? Nay, what if you had no Grace? Do you not hear God daily offering you Christ and Grace? doth he not intreat and Beseech you to be Reconciled unto him (2 *Cor.* 5. 19, 20.) and would he not compel you to come in? (*Mat.* 22.) Do you not feel some unquietness in your sinful Condition? and some motions and strivings at your heart to get out of it? Certainly (though you should be one that hath yet no Grace to salvation) yet these continued offers of Grace, and strivings of the Spirit of Christ with your heart, do shew that God hath not quite forsaken you; and that your day of Grace and Visitation is not past.

DOUBT XV.

BUt I have sinned since my Profession, and that even against my Knowledge and Conscience: I have had Temptations to sin, and I have considered of the Evil and Danger, and yet in the very soberest deliberations, I have Resolved to sin. And how can such a one have any true Grace: or be saved?

ANSWER.

1. IF you had not true Grace, God is ſtill offering it, and ready to work it. 2. Where do you finde in Scripture that none who have true Grace, do ſin knowingly or Deliberately? Perhaps you will ſay in *Heb.* 10. 24. *If we ſin willfully after the knowledge of the Truth, there Remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a fearful looking for of Judgement, and fire which ſhall devour the adverſaries. Anſ.* But you muſt know that it is not every wilful ſin which is there mentioned; but, as even now I told you, *Unbelief* is peculiarly called *Sin* in the New Teſtament: And the true meaning of the Text is, *If we utterly renounce Chriſt by Infidelity, as not being the true Meſſiah, after we have known his Truth, then &c.* Indeed, none ſin more againſt knowledge then the Godly when they do ſin: For they know more, for the moſt part, then others do. And Paſſion and Senſuality (the remnant of it which yet remaineth) will be working ſtrongly in your very Deliberations againſt ſin, and either perverting the Judgement to doubt whether it be a ſin, or whether

ther there be any such danger in it? or whether it be not a very little sin? Or else blinding it, that it cannot see the Arguments against the sin in their full vigor: Or at least, prepossessing the Heart and Delight, and so hindring our Reasons against sin, from going down to the Heart and working on the Will, and so from Commanding the Actions of the Body. This may befal a godly man. And moreover, God may withdraw his Grace, as he did from *Peter* and *David* in their sin: and then our Considerations will work but faintly, and sensuality and sinful Passion will work effectually. It is scarce Possible, I think, that such a man as *David* could be so long about so horrid a sin, and after contrive the murther of *Uriah*, and all this without deliberation, or any reasonings in himself to the contrary.

3. The truth is, though this be no good cause for any Repenting sinner to doubt of Salvation, yet it is a very grievous aggravation of sin, to commit it against Knowledge and Conscience, and upon consideration. And therefore I advise all that Love their Peace or Salvation to take heed of it. For as they will finde that no sin doth deeplier wound the Conscience, and plunge the sinner into fearful perplexities; which oft times hang on him very long; so the oftner such sin

sin is committed, the less evidence will such a one have of the sincerity of their faith and obedience: And therefore, in the name of God beware. And let the troubled soul make this the matter of his Moderate Humiliation, and spare not. Bewail it before God. Take shame to your self, and freely confess it, when you are called to it, before men: Favour it not, and deal not gently with it, if you would have Peace; but give glory to God by taking the just dishonor to your selves. Tender dealing is an ill sign; and hath sad effects. But yet for every sin against knowledge to doubt of the Truth of Grace, is not right: much less to doubt of the pardon of that sin when we truly Repent of it. Are you unfeignedly sorry for your sins against Conscience, and Resolve against them for the future, through the help of Gods Grace? If so, then that sin is pardoned now, through the blood of Christ believed in, whether you had then Grace or not.

DOUBT

DOUBT XVI.

But I have such Corruptions in my nature that I cannot overcome: I have such a passionate nature, and such a vanity of minde, and such worldly desires, that though I pray and strive against them daily, yet do they prevail: And it is not striving without overcoming that will prove the truth of Grace in any. Besides, I do not Grow in Grace, as all Gods people do.

ANSWER.

1. DO you think sin is not overcome as long as it dwelleth in us, and daily troubleth us, and is working in us? *Paul* saith, *The evil that I would not do, that I do*; and *We cannot do the things that We would*: And yet *Paul* was not overcome of these sins, nor had they Dominion over him. You must consider of these sins as in the habit or in the Act. In the Habit as they are in the Passions they will be still strong: but as they are in the Will they are weak and overcome. Had you not rather you were void of these Passions, then not? and that you might restrain them in the act? Are you not weary of

of them, and daily pray and ſtrive againſt them? If ſo, it ſeems they have not your will. 2. And for the Actual Paſſion (as I may call it), it ſelf, you muſt diſtinguiſh between 1. thoſe which the Will hath full power of, and which it hath but partial power over. 2. And between the ſeveral Degrees of the Paſsion. 3. And between the inward Paſsion and the outward expreſsions.

Some Degree of anger and of luſt will oft ſtir in the heart, whether we Will or not. But I hope you reſtrain it in the Degree: and much more from breaking out into Practiſes of luſt, or Curſed ſpeeches, or Railings, Backbitings, Slanderings or Revenge: For theſe, your Will, if ſanctified, hath power to command. Even the Acts of our Corruptions as well as the habits will ſtick by us in this life: but if it be in groſs ſins, or avoidable Infirmities careleſly or willfully continued in, I can tell you a better way to Aſſurance and Comfort then your Complaints are. Inſtead of being afraid leſt you cannot have your ſin and Chriſt together, do but more heartily oppoſe that ſin, and deal roundly and conſcionably againſt it till you have overcome it, and then you may eaſe your ſelf of your complaints and troubles. If you ſay, *O but it is not ſo eaſily done: I cannot overcome it: I have prayed and ſtrove*

againſt

against it long. I answer, But are you heartily willing to be rid of it? If you be, it will be no impossible matter to be rid of the outward expressions, and the high Degree of the Passion, though not of every degree. Try this course a while, and then judge: 1. Plainly confess your Guiltiness: 2. Never more excuse it or plead for it, to any that blameth you. 3. Desire those that live and deal with you, to tell you roundly of it as soon as they discern it, and engage your self to them to take it well, as a friendly action which your self requested of them. 4. When you feel the Passion begin to stir, enter into serious Consideration of the sinfulness, or go and tell some friend of your frail inclination, and presently beg their help against it. If it be Godly persons that you are angry with, instead of giving them ill words, presently as soon as you feel the fire kindle, say to them, *I have a very passionate nature, which already is kindled, I pray you reprehend me for it, and help me against it, and pray to God for my deliverance.* Also go to God your self, and complain to him of it, and beg his help. Lastly, be sure that you make not light of it: and see that you avoid the occasions as much as you can. If you are indeed willing to be rid of the sin, then do not call these directions too hard: But shew your willingness

in

in ready practising them. And thus you may see that it is better make your Corruptions the matter of your humiliation and reformation, then of your Torment.

And for the other part of the Doubt, that you grow not in Grace: I answer. 1. The Promises of Growth are Conditional, or else signifie what God will usually do for his people: but it is certain that they be not Absolute to all Believers. For it is certain that all true Christians do not alway Grow; nay that many do too oft decline, and lose their first fervour of Love, and fall into sin, and live more Carelesly: Yea, it is certain that a true Believer may Dye in such Decays, or in a far lower state then formerly he hath been in. If I thought this needed proof, I could easily prove it: But he that openeth his eyes may soon see enough proof in *England*. 2. Many Christians do much mistake themselves about the very nature of true Grace; and then no wonder if they think that they thrive when they do not, and that they thrive not when they do. They think that more of the life and Truth of Grace doth lie in Passionate Feelings of Sin, Grace, Duty, &c. in sensible Zeal, Grief, Joy, &c. and do not know that the chief part lieth in the Understandings Estimation, and the Wilsfirm Choyce and Resolution. And then they think

think they decline in Grace, because they cannot Weep, or Joy so sensibly as before. Let me assure you of this as truth, 1. Young people have usually more vigour of Affections then old; because they have more vigour of body, and hot blood, and agile active spirits: when the freezing decayed bodies and spirits of old men must needs make an abatement of their fervour in all duties. 2. The like may be said of most that are weak and sickly in comparison of the strong and healthful. 3. All things affect men most deeply when they are new, and Time weareth off the vigour of that Affection. The first hearing of such a fight, or such a victory, or such a great man, or friend dead, doth much affect us: but so it doth not still. When you first receive any benefit, it more delighteth you then long after: So Married people, or any other in the first change of their Condition are more affected with it then afterward. And indeed mans nature cannot hold up in a constant elevation of Affections. Children are more taken with every thing that they see and hear then old men, because all is new to them, and all seems old to the other. 4. I have told you before that some natures are more fiery, Passionate and fervent then others are; and in such a little Grace will cause a great deal of Earnestness,

Zeal

Zeal and Paſſion. But let me tell you, that you may grow in theſe, and not grow in the body of your Graces. Doubtleſs Satan himſelf may do much to kindle your Zeal, if he do but ſee it voyd of ſound Knowledge, (as he did in *Iames* and *Iohn* when they would have called for Fire from Heaven, but knew not what ſpirit they were of.) For the doleful Caſe of Chriſts Churches in this age hath put quite beyond diſpute, that none do the Devils work more effectually, nor oppoſe the Kingdom of Chriſt more deſperately, then they that have the hotteſt Zeal with the weakeſt Judgements: And as Fire is moſt excellent and neceſſary in the Chimney, but in the thatch it is worſe then the vileſt dung; ſo is Zeal moſt excellent when guided by ſound Judgement; but more deſtructive then prophane ſenſuality when it is let looſe and miſguided.

On the other ſide, you may decay much in feeling and fervour of Affections, and yet Grow in Grace, if you do but grow in the Underſtanding and the Will. And indeed this is the Common Growth which Chriſtians have in their Age: Examine therefore whether you have this or no. Do you not underſtand the things of the Spirit better then you formerly did? Do you not value God, Chriſt, Glory and Grace at higher rates then formerly?

formerly? Are you not more fully Resolved to stick to Christ to the death then formerly you have been? I do not think but it would be a harder work for Satan to draw you from Christ to the flesh then heretofore. When the tree hath done growing in visible greatness, it groweth in rootedness. The fruit grows first in bulk and quantity, and then in mellow sweetness. Are not you less Censorious, and more Peaceable then heretofore? I tell you, that is a more noble growth then a great deal of austere and bitter, youthful, censorious, dividing Zeal of many will prove. Mark most aged experienced Christians, that walk uprightly, and you will find that they quite outstrip the younger, 1. In experience, knowledge, prudence and soundness of Judgement. 2. In well-setled Resolutions for Christ, his Truth and Cause. 3. In a Love of Peace, especially in the Church, and a hatred of dissentions, perverse contendings and divisions. If you can shew this growth, say not that you do not grow.

3. But suppose you do not grow? should you therefore deny the sincerity of your Grace? I would not perswade any soul that they grow, when they do not. But if you do not, be humbled for it, and endeavour it for the future. Make it your desire and daily business, and spare not. Lye not still complaining,

plaining, but rouſe up your ſoul, and ſee what's amiſs, and ſet upon neglected duties, and remove thoſe Corruptions that hinder your Growth: Converſe with Growing Chriſtians, and under quickening means: Endeavour the Good of other mens ſouls as well as your own: and then you'l find that growth, which will ſilence this Doubt, and do much more for you then that.

DOUBT XVII.

I Am troubled with ſuch Blaſpemous thoughts and Temptations to Unbelief, even againſt God, and Chriſt, and Scripture, and the Life to come, that I doubt I have no faith.

ANSWER.

TO be Tempted is no ſign of Graceleſneſs, but to yield to the Temptation: nor every yielding neither; but to be overcome of the Temptation! Moſt Melancholy people, eſpecially that have any knowledge in Religion, are frequently haunted with Blaſphemous Temptations. I have oft wondred that the Devil ſhould have ſuch a power and advantage in the predominancy of

of that diſtemper. Scarce one perſon of ten, who ever was with me in deep Melancholy, either for the Cure of body or mind, but hath been haunted with theſe Blaſphemous thoughts; and that ſo impetuouſly and violently ſet on and followed, that it might appear to be from the Devil; yea even many that never ſeemed Godly, or to mind any ſuch thing before. I confeſs it hath been a ſtrengthening to my own faith, to ſee the Devil ſuch an Enemy to the Chriſtian faith, yea to the Godhead it ſelf.

But perhaps you will ſay, *It is not meer Temptation from Satan that I complain of; but it takes too much with my ſinful heart: I am ready to doubt oft-times whether there be a God, or whether his Providence determine of the things here below? or whether Scripture be true, or the Soul Immortal? &c.*

Anſw. This is a very great ſin, and you ought to bewail and abhorr it, and in the Name of God make not light of it, but look to it betime: But yet let me tell you, that ſome degree of this Blaſphemy and Infidelity may remain with the trueſt ſaving Faith. The beſt may ſay, *Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.* But I will tell you my Judgement; When your unbelief is ſuch as to be a ſign of a Graceleſs ſoul in the ſtate of damnation: *If your Doubtings of the*

Truth

Truth of Scripture and the Life to come, be so great that you will not let go the pleasures and profits of sin, and part with all, if God call you to it, in Hope of that Glory promised, and to escape the Judgement threatned, because you look upon the things of the life to come but as uncertain things; then is your Belief no saving Belief; but your unbelief is prevalent. But if, for all your staggerings, you see so much probabil ty of the Truth of Scripture and the Life to come, that you are resolved to venture (and part with, if called to it) all Worldly Hopes and Happiness for the Hope of that promised Glory, and to make it the chiefest business of your life to attain it, and do deny your self the pleasures of sin for that end; this is a true saving Faith, as is evident by its Victory; notwithstanding all the Infidelity, Atheism and Blasphemy that is mixt with it.

But again, let me advise you to take heed of this hainous sin, and bewail and detest the very least degree of it. It is dangerous when the Devil strikes at the very root and heart & foundation of all your religion. There is more sinfulness and danger in this then in many other sins. And therefore let it never be motioned to your soul without abhorrence. Two ways the Devil hath to move it. The one is by his immediate inward suggestions: these are bad enough. The other is by his

his Accurſed Inſtruments: and this is a far more dangerous way: whether it be by books, or by the words of men: And yet if it be by notorious wicked men or fools, the Temptation is the leſs: but when it is by men of cunning wit, and ſmooth tongues, and hypocritical lives (for far be that wickedneſs from me, as to call them Godly, or wiſe or honeſt) then it is the greateſt ſnare that the Devil hath to lay. O juſt and Dreadful God! did I think one day that thoſe that I was then praying with, and rejoycing with, and that went up with me to the houſe of God in familiarity, would this day be blaſphemers of thy ſacred Name? and deny the Lord that bought them? and deride thy holy word as a fable? and give up themſelves to the preſent pleaſures of ſin, becauſe they Believe not thy promiſed Glory! O Righteous and Merciful God! that haſt preſerved the humble from this Condemnation! and haſt permitted only the Proud and Senſual Profeſſors to fall into it! and haſt given them over to Helliſh Converſations according to the nature of their Helliſh opinions! that they might be rather a terror to others then a ſnare! I call their Doctrine and Practice Helliſh, from its Original, becauſe it comes from the Father of Lyes: but not that there is any ſuch opinion or practice in Hell. He

that

that tempts others to Deny the Godhead, the Christian faith, the Scripture, the Life to come, doth no whit doubt of any one of them himself, but believes and Trembles. O fearful blindness of the professors of Religion, that will hear, if not receive these Blasphemies from the mouth of an Apostate Professor, which they would abhor if it came immediately from the Devil himself. With what sad complaints and trembling do poor sinners cry out (and not without Cause) *O I am haunted with such Blaspemous temptations, that I am afraid lest God should suddenly destroy me, that ever such thoughts should come into my heart*: But if an Instrument of the Devil come and plead against the Scripture or the Life to come, or Christ himself, they will hear him with less detestation. The Devil knows that familiarity will cause us to take that from a man, which we would abhor from the Devil himself immediately. I intend not to give you now a particular preservative against each of these Temptations: Only let me tell you, that this is the direct way to Infidelity, Apostacy, and the sin against the Holy Ghost: and if by any Seducers the Devil do overcome you herein, you are lost for ever, *and there will be no more sacrifice for your sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and that fire which shal devour the adversaries of Christ.*

DOUBT

DOUBT XVIII.

I Have so great fears of Death, and unwillingness to be with God, that I am afraid I have no Grace: for if I had Pauls *spirit, I should be able to say with him,* I desire to depart and to be with Christ: *Whereas now no news would be to me more unwelcome.*

ANSWER.

THere is a loathness to Dye that comes from a Desire to do God more service; and another that comes from an Apprehension of unreadiness, when we would fain have more Assurance of Salvation first: or would be fitter to meet our Lord. Blame not a man to be somewhat backward, that knows it must go with him for ever in Heaven or Hell according as he is found at death. But these two be not so much *a loathness to Dye, as a loathness to Dye now, at this time.* 2. There is also in all men living, Good and bad, a natural abhorrence and fear of death. God hath put this into mans nature (even in Innocency) to be his great means of Governing the World. No man would live in order,

or be kept in obedience, but for this. He that cares not for his own Life, is Master of anothers. Grace doth not root out this abhorrency of Death, no more then it unmanneth us: Onely it restrains it from excess, and so far overcometh the violence of the Passion, by the apprehensions of a better life beyond death, that a Believer may the more quietly and willingly submit to it. *Paul* himself desireth not Death, but the Life which followeth it; *He desireth to depart, and to be with Christ*: that is, He had rather be in Heaven then on earth, and therefore he is contented to submit to the penal sharp passage. God doth not command you to Desire death it self; nor forbid you fearing it as an evil to nature and a punishment of sin: Only he requireth you to Desire the Blessedness to be enjoyed after Death, and that so earnestly as may make Death it self the easier to you. Thank God, if the fear of death be somewhat abated in you, though it be not sweetned. Men may pretend what they please, but nature will abhor death as long as its nature, and as long as man is man: else temporal death had been no punishment to *Adam*, if his Innocent nature had not abhor'd it: it was an evil to it. Tell me but this: If Death did not stand in your way to Heaven, but that you could travel to Heaven

ven as easily as to *London*, would not you rather go thither, and be with Christ, then stay in sin and vanity here on earth, so be it you were certain to be with Christ? If you can say *Yea* to this, then it is apparent that your loathness to dye is either from the uncertainty of your salvation, or from the natural averseness to a dissolution, or both; and not from an unwillingness to be with Christ, or a preferring the vanities of this world before the Blessedness of that to come. Lastly, it may be God may lay that affliction on you, or use some other necessary means with you, yet before you dye, that may make you willinger then now you are.

DOUBT XIX.

God layeth upon me such heavy Afflictions, that I cannot believe he Loves me: He writteth bitter things against me, and taketh me for his enemy: I am afflicted in my health, in my name, in my children, and nearest friends, and in my state: I live in continual poverty, or pinching distress of one kinde or other: yea my very soul is filled with his terorrs, and night and day is his hand heavy upon me.

ANSWER.

I Have said enough to this before: Nor do I think it needful to say any more, when the Holy Ghost hath said so much: but only to desire you to read what he hath written in *Heb.* 12. and *Job* throughout: and *Psal.* 37. and 73. and divers others. The next doubt is contrary.

DOUBT. XX.

I Read in Scripture that through many tribulations we must enter into heaven; and that all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution: and that he that taketh not up his Cross, and so followeth Christ, cannot be his Disciple: and that if we are not corrected, we are bastards, and not sons: But I never had any Affliction from God, but have lived in constant prosperity to this day. Christ saith, Wo to you, when all men speak well of you: *but all men for ought I know speak well of me: and therefore I doubt of my sincerity.*

ANSWER.

ANSWER.

I Would not have mentioned this Doubt, but that I was so fooliſh as to be troubled with it my ſelf: and perhaps ſome others may be as fooliſh as I: though I think but few in theſe times; our great friends have *Done* ſo much to Reſolve them more effectually then words could have done. 1. Some of thoſe Texts ſpeak onely of mans duty of bearing perſecution and tribulation, when God lays it on us, rather then of the Event, that it ſhall certainly come. 2. Yet I think it ordinarily certain and to be expected as to the Event: Doubtleſs Tribulation is Gods common road to Heaven: Every ignorant perſon is ſo well ware of this, that they delude themſelves in their ſufferings, ſaying, That God hath given them their puniſhment in this life, and therefore they hope he will not puniſh them in another. If any ſoul be ſo ſilly as to fear and doubt, for want of Affliction; if none elſe will do the Cure, let them but follow my Counſel, and I dare warrant them for this, and I will adviſe them to nothing but what is honeſt, yea and neceſſary, and what I have tried effectually upon my ſelf: and I can aſſure you, it

cured me, and I can give it a *Probatum est*. And first, see that you be faithful in your Duty to all sinners within your reach; be they great or small, Gentlemen or Beggars, do your duty in Reproving them meekly and lovingly, yet plainly and seriously, telling them of the danger of Gods everlasting wrath; and when you find them obstinate, tell the Church-Officers of them, that they may do their duty; and if yet they are unreformed, they may be excluded from the Churches Communion, and all Christian familiarity. Try this course a while, and if you meet with no Afflictions, and get no more fists about your ears then your own, nor more tongues against you then formerly, tell me I am mistaken. Men basely bawk and shun almost all the displeasing ungrateful work of Christianity of purpose, lest they should have sufferings in the flesh, and then they doubt of their sincerity for want of sufferings. My second Advice is, Do but stay a while in Patience (but prepare your Patience for a sharper encounter) and do not tye God to your time. He hath not told you when your Afflictions shall come: If he deal easier with you then others, and give you a longer time to prepare for them, be not you offended at that, and do not quarrel with your mercies. It is about seventeen

years

years since I was troubled with this Doubt, thinking I was no son, because I was not afflicted; and I think I have had few days without pain for this sixteen years since together, nor but few hours, if any one, for this six or seven years: And thus my scruple is removed.

And if yet any be troubled with this Doubt, if the Churches and Common trouble be any trouble to them, shall I be bold to tell them my thoughts? (onely understand, that I pretend not to Prophesy, but to Conjecture at Effects by the position of their Moral Causes.) *I think that the Righteous King of Saints is even now, for our over-admiring rash zeal, and high profession, making for England so heavy an Affliction and sharp a scourge, to be inflicted by seduced, proud, self-conceited Professours, as neither We nor our Fathers did ever yet bear: Except it should prove the merciful intent of our Father, onely to suffer them to ripen for their own destruction, to be a standing Monument for the effectual warning of all after-ages of the Church, Whether pride and heady Zeal may bring Professors of holiness; And when they are full ripe, to do by them as at Munster and in New-England, that they may go no further, but their folly may be known to all: Amen.* I have told you of my thoughts of this long ago in my Book of *Baptism*. All

ALL theſe Doubts I have here anſwered, that you may ſee how neceſſary it is that in all your troubles you be ſure to diſtinguiſh between Matter of Doubting, and Matter of Humiliation. Alas, what ſoul is ſo holy on the Earth, but muſt daily ſay, *Forgive us our treſpaſſes*? and cry out with *Paul*, *O Wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of death*? But at the ſame time we may thank God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. If every ſin ſhould make us Doubt, we ſhould do nothing but doubt. I know you may eaſily tell a long and a ſad ſtory of your ſins; how you are troubled with this and that, and many a diſtemper, and weak and wanting in every Grace and Duty, and have committed many ſins: But doth it follow that therefore you have no true Grace? Learn therefore to be Humbled for every ſin, but not to Doubt of your ſincerity and ſalvation for every ſin.

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DIRECTION XXX.

30. Whatsoever New Doubtings do arise in your soul, see that you carefully discern whether they are such as must be resolved from the Consideration of General Grace, or of Special Grace: And especially be sure of this, that when you want or lose your Certainty of sincerity and salvation, you have presently recourse to the Probability of it, and lose not the Comforts of that: Or if you should lose the sight of a Probability of Special Grace, yet see that you have recourse at the utmost to General Grace, and never let go the Comforts of that at the worst.

THis Rule is of unspeakable Necessity and use for your Peace and Comfort. Here are three several Degrees of the Grounds of Comfort. It is exceeding weak-

neſs for a man that is beaten from one of theſe holds, therefore to let go the other too: and becauſe he cannot have the higheſt Degree, therefore to conclude that he hath none at all.

I beſeech you in all your Doubtings and Complainings ſtill Remember the two Rules here laid down. 1. All Doubts ariſe not from the ſame Cauſe, and therefore muſt not have the ſame Cure. Let the firſt thing which you do upon every doubt, be this: To conſider *Whether it come from the Unbelieving or low Apprehenſions of the General Grounds of Comfort, or from the want of evidence of ſpecial Grace?* For that which is a fit Remedy for one of theſe, will do little for the cure of the other. 2. If your Doubting be onely *Whether you be ſincere in Beli ving, Loving, Hoping, Repenting and Obeying?* then it will not anſwer this Doubt, though you diſcern never ſo much of Gods Merciful Nature, or Chriſts Gracious Office, or the Univerſal ſufficiency of his Death and Satisfaction, or the freeneſs and extent of the Promiſe of Pardon. For I profeſs conſiderately, that I do not know in all the Body of Popery concerning Merits, Juſtification, Humane Satisfactions, Aſſurance or any other point about Grace, for which we unchurch them, that they erre half ſo dangerouſly, as

Saltmarſh

Saltmarsh and such Antinomians do in this one point, when they say, That *Christ hath Repented and Believed for us*; meaning it of that Faith and Repentance which he hath made the Conditions of our salvation: and that *We must no more question our own faith, then we must question Christ the Object of it.* It will be no saving Plea at the day of Judgement to say, *Though I Repented not, and Believed not, yet Christ dyed for me, or God is merciful, or Christ Repented and Believed for me, or God made me a free Promise and Gift of salvation, if I would Repent and Believe.* What Comfort would such an Answer give them? And therefore doubtless it will not serve now to quiet any knowing Christian against those Doubts that arise from the want of particular evidence of special Grace: though in their own place, the General Grounds of Comfort are of Absolute Necessity thereto.

2. On the other side, if your Doubts arise from any Defect in your Apprehensions of General Grace; it is not your looking after Marks in your self that is the way to Resolve them. I told you in the beginning, that the General Grounds of Comfort lie in four particulars (that square Foundation which will bear up all the Faith of the Saints.) First, Gods merciful and unconceivably Good and Gracious

Gracious Nature, and his Love to mankind. Secondly, the Gracious Nature of the Mediatour God and Man, with his moſt Gracious undertaken Office of Saving and Reconciling. Thirdly, the ſufficiency of Chriſts Death and ſatisfaction for all the world, to ſave them if they will Accept him and his Grace: I put it in terms beyond diſpute, becauſe I would not build up Believers Comforts on points which godly Divines do contradict (as little as may be:) Yet I am paſt all Doubt my ſelf, that Chriſt did actually make ſatisfaction to Gods Juſtice for All; and that no man periſheth for want of an Expiatory ſacrifice, but for want of faith to believe and apply it, or for want of Repentance, and yielding to Recovering Grace. The fourth is, The Univerſal Grant of pardon, and Right to ſalvation, on Condition of Faith and Repentance. If your Doubt ariſe from the Ignorance or overlooking of any of theſe, to theſe muſt you have recourſe for your Cure.

Where Note, that all thoſe Doubts which come from the greatneſs of your ſin, as ſuch that you think will not therefore be forgiven, or that come from the ſenſe of Unworthineſs, (in a Legal ſenſe) or want of Merit in your ſelf; and all your Doubts whether God be willing to accept and forgive you, though

you

you ſhould Repent and believe; or whether any ſacrifice was offered by Chriſt for your ſins; I ſay, all theſe come from your Ignorance or Unbelief of ſome or all of the four General Grounds here mentioned; and from them muſt be cured.

Note alſo in a ſpecial manner, That there is a great difference between theſe four General Grounds, and your particular Evidences in point of Certainty: For theſe four Corner-ſtones are faſt founded beyond all poſſibility of Removal; ſo that they are always of as undoubted Certainty as that the Heaven is over your head; and they are immutable; ſtill the ſame. Theſe you are commanded ſtrictly to Believe with a Divine Faith, as being the clearly revealed Truths of God; and if you ſhould not Believe them, yet they remain firm and true, and your unbelief ſhould not make voyd the Univerſal promiſe and Grace of God. But your own Evidences of ſpecial Grace, are not ſo Certain, ſo Clear, or ſo Immutable; nor are you bound to Believe them, but to ſearch after them that you may know them: You are not bound by any Word of God ſtrictly to Believe that you do Believe, or Repent, but to try and diſcern it. This then is the firſt part of this Direction, That you always diſcover whether your troubles ariſe from

low

low unbelieving or ignorant thoughts of Gods Mercifulneſs, Chriſts Gracious nature and office, General Satisfaction, or the univerſal Promiſe: or whether they ariſe from want of evidence of ſincerity in your ſelf? and accordingly in your thoughts apply the Remedy.

The ſecond part of the Direction is, that you hold faſt *Probabilities* of Special Grace when you loſe your *Certainty*, and that you hold faſt your General Grounds when you loſe both the former. Never forget this in any of your Doubts.

You ſay, your faith and obedience have ſuch breaches and ſad defects in them, that you cannot be *Certain* that they are ſincere. Suppoſe it be ſo: Do you ſee no great *Likelyhood* or hopes yet that they are ſincere? If you do (as I think many Chriſtians eaſily may, that yet receive not a proportionable comfort) remember that this is no ſmall Mercy, but matter of great conſolation.

But ſuppoſe the worſt, that you *ſee* no Grace in your ſelf: yet you cannot be ſure you have none: For it may be there, and you not ſee it. Yea ſuppoſe the worſt, that you were *ſure* that you had no true Grace at all, yet remember that you have ſtill abundant cauſe of Comfort in Gods General Grace. Do you think you muſt needs Deſpair, or

give

give up all Hope and Comfort, or conclude your self irrecoverably loſt, becauſe you are Graceleſs? why be it known to you there is that ground of Conſolation in general Grace that may make the hearts of the very wicked to leap for joy. Do I need to prove that to you? You know that the Goſpel is called *Glad tidings of ſalvation*, and the Preachers of it are to tell thoſe to whom they preach it. *Behold we bring you tidings of great Joy, and glad tidings to all People.* And you know before the Goſpel comes to men they are miſerable. If then it be glad tidings and tidings of great joy to all the unconverted where it comes, why ſhould it not be ſo to you? and where is your great joy? If you be Graceleſs, is it nothing to know that God is exceeding merciful, *ſlow to anger, ready to forgive, pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin?* loving mankinde? Is it nothing to know that the Lord hath brought Infinite Mercy and Goodneſs down into humane fleſh? and hath taken on him the moſt bleſſed office of Reconciling, and is become the Lamb of God? Is it nothing to you, that all your ſins have a ſufficient Sacrifice paid for them, ſo that you are certain not to periſh for want of a Ranſom? Is it nothing to you, that God hath made ſuch an univerſal Grant of Pardon and Salvation to all that will Believe: and

that

that you are not on the terms of the meer Law of Works, to be judged for not obeying in perfection? Suppose you are never so certainly Graceless, is it not a Ground of unspeakable Comfort, that you may be certain that *nothing can condemn you, but a flat refusal or unwillingness to have Christ and his Salvation.* This is a certain truth, which may comfort a man as yet unsanctified, that sin meerly as sin shall not Condemn him; nor any thing in the World, but the final obstinate Refusal of the Remedy, which thereby leaveth all other sin unpardoned.

Now I would ask you this Question in your greatest fears that you are out of Christ: Are you Willing to have Christ to pardon, sanctifie, guide and save you? or not? If you are; then you are a true Believer, and did not know it. If you are not; if you will but wait on Gods Word in Hearing and Reading, and Consider frequently and seriously of the necessity and excellency of Christ and Glory, and the evil of sin, & the vanity of the world, and wilbut beg earnestly of God to make you Willing, you shall finde that God hath not appointed you this means in vain, & that this way will be more profitable then all your complainings. See therefore when you are at the very lowest, that you forsake not the Comforts of General Grace.

And

And indeed those that deny any General Grace or Redemption, Do leave poor Christians in a very lamentable Condition. For, alas, Assurance of Special Grace (yea or a high probability) is not so common a thing as meer Disputers against Doubting have imagined. And when a poor Christian is beaten from his Assurance (which few have) he hath nothing but Probabilities: and when he hath no confident probable perswasion of special Grace, where is he then? and what hath he left to support his soul? I will not so far now meddle with that Controversie, as to open further how this opinion tends to leave most Christians in desperation, for all the pretences it hath found? and I had done more, but that General Redemption or Satisfaction is commonly taught in the maintaining of the General Sufficiency of it, though men understand not how they contradict themselves.

But perhaps you will say, This is cold comfort: for I may as well argue thus, *Christ will damn sinners: I am a sinner, therefore he will damn me*: as to argue thus, *Christ will save sinners: I am a Sinner: therefore he will save me.* I answer: There is no shew of soundness in either of these Arguments. It is not a *certainty* that Christ will save you, that can be gathered from General Grace alone: that

that must be had from assurance of of special Grace superadded to the General. But a conditional certainty you may have from General Grace onely: and thus you may soundly and infallibly argue, *God hath made a Grant to every sinful man, of Pardon and salvation through Christs Sacrifice, if they will but Repent and Believe in Christ: but I am a sinful man, therefore God hath made this Grant of Pardon and Salvation to me.*

DIRECT-

DIRECTION XXXI.

If God do bleſs you with an able, faithful, prudent, judicious Paſtor, take him for your Guide under Chriſt in the way to Salvation; and open to him your Caſe, and deſire his advice in all your extraordinary preſſing neceſſities, where you have found the advice of other godly friends to be inſufficient: And this not once or twice only, but as often as ſuch preſſing neceſſities ſhall return. Or if your own Paſtor be more defective for ſuch a work, make uſe of ſome other Miniſter of Chriſt, who is more meet.

HEre I have theſe ſeveral things to open to you. 1. That it is your Duty to ſeek this Direction from the Guides of the Church. 2. When and in what caſes you ſhould

ſhould do this. 3. To what end, and how far. 4. What Miniſters they be that you ſhould chooſe thereto. 5. In what manner you muſt open your Caſe, that you may receive ſatisfaction.

1. The firſt hath two parts. 1. That you muſt open your Caſe. 2. And that to your Paſtor. 1. The Devil hath great advantage while you keep his Counſel: Two are better then one; for if one of them fall he hath another to help him. It is dangerous Reſiſting ſuch an enemy alone. An uniting of forces oft procureth victory. God giveth others knowledge, prudence, and other gifts for our good: that ſo every member of the body may have need of another, and each be uſeful to the other. An Independency of Chriſtian upon Chriſtian, is moſt unchriſtian: much more of people on their Guides. It ceaſeth to be a Member, which is ſeparated from the body: and to make no uſe of the body or fellow members, is next to ſeparation from them. Sometime baſhfulneſs is the cauſe, ſometimes ſelf-confidence (a far worſe cauſe;) but whatever is the cauſe of Chriſtians ſmothering their Doubts, the effects are oft ſad. The diſeaſe is oft gone ſo far, that the Cure is very difficult, before ſome baſhful or proud or tender Patients will open their diſeaſe. The very opening

of

of a mans grief to a faithful friend, doth oft eaſe the heart of it ſelf. 2. And that this ſhould be done to your Paſtor, I will ſhew you further anon.

2. But you muſt underſtand well *when* this is your Duty. 1. Not in every ſmall infirmity, which accompanies Chriſtians in their daily moſt watchful Converſation: Nor yet in every leſſer Doubt, which may be otherways reſolved. It is a folly and a wrong to Phyſitians to run to them for every cut finger or prick with a pin. Every neighbour can help you in this. 2. Nor except it be a weighty caſe indeed, go not firſt to a Miniſter. But firſt ſtudy the caſe your ſelf, and ſeek Gods direction: If that will not ſerve, open your caſe to your neareſt boſom friend that is godly and judicious. And in theſe two caſes always go to your Paſtor: 1. In caſe privater means can do you no Good: then God calls you to ſeek further. If a cut finger ſo feſter that ordinary means will not cure it, you muſt go to the Phyſician. 2. If the caſe be weighty and dangerous: For then none but the more prudent advice is to be truſted. If you be ſtruck with a dangerous diſeaſe, I would not have you delay ſo long, nor wrong your ſelf ſo much as to ſtay while you tamper with every womans medicine, but go preſently to the Phyſician. So if you either fall into

into any grievous sin, or any terrible pangs of Conscience, or any great streights and difficulties about matters of Doctrine or Practice, go presently to your Pastour for advice. The Devil, and Pride, and Bashfulness will do their utmost to hinder you; but see that they prevail not.

3. Next consider to what End you must do this. Not 1. either to expect that a Minister can of himself create Peace in you: or that all your Doubts should vanish as soon as ever you have opened your mind. Onely the great Peacemaker, the Prince of Peace, can create Peace in you: Ascribe not to any the office of the Holy Ghost, to be your effectual Comforter. To expect more from man then belongs to man, is the way to receive nothing from him, but to cause God to blast to you the best endeavours. 2. Nor must you resolve to take all meerly from the word of your Pastour, as if he were Infallible: Nor absolutely to Judge of your self as he Judgeth. For he may be too rigorous, or more commonly too charitable in his opinion of you: There may be much of your disposition and conversation unknown to him, which may hinder his right Judging. But 1. You must use your Pastour as the ordained Instrument & Messenger of the Lord Jesus & his Spirit, appointed to speak a word in season

to

to the weary, and to ſhew to man his Righteouſneſs, and to ſtrengthen the weak hands and feeble knees, yea and more, to bind and looſe on Earth, as Chriſt doth bind and looſe in Heaven. As Chriſt and his Spirit do onely ſave in the principal place, and yet Miniſters ſave ſouls in ſubordination to them as his Inſtruments. *Act.* 26. 17, 18. 1 *Tim.* 4. 15, 16. *Jam.* 5. 20. So Chriſt and the Spirit are as Principal Cauſes the onely Comforters: but his Miniſters are Comforters under him. 2. And that which you muſt expect from them is theſe two things. 1. You muſt expect thoſe fuller diſcoveries of Gods Will, then you are able to make your ſelf, by which you may have aſſurance of your duty to God, and of the ſenſe of Scripture, which expreſſeth how God will deal with you: That ſo a clearer diſcovery of Gods mind may Reſolve your Doubts. 2. In the mean time till you can come to a full Reſolution, you may and muſt ſomewhat ſtay your ſelf on the very Judgement of your Paſtour: Not as Infallible; but as a diſcovery of the Probability of your Good or bad eſtate: and ſo of your duty alſo. Though you will not renounce your own underſtanding, and believe any man when you know he is deceived, or would deceive you, yet you will ſo far ſuſpect your own reaſon, and value anothers,

others, as to have a ſpecial regard to every mans Judgement in his own Profeſſion. If the Phyſician tell you that your diſeaſe is not dangerous, or the Lawyer that your Cauſe is good, it will more Comfort you then if another man ſhould ſay as much. It may much ſtay your heart till you can reach to clear Evidences and Aſſurance, to have a Paſtor that is well acquainted with you, and is faithful and Judicious to tell you that he verily thinks that you are in a ſafe Condition. 3. But the chief uſe of his Advice is, not ſo much to tell you what he thinks of you, as to give you Directions how you may Judge of your ſelf, and come out of your trouble: Beſides the benefit of his Prayers to God for you.

4. Next let me tell you what men you muſt chooſe to open your mind to: And they muſt be, 1. Men of Judgement and Knowledge, and not the Ignorant, be they never ſo honeſt: Elſe they may deceive you, not knowing what they do: either for want of underſtanding the Scripture, and the nature of Grace and Sin; or for want of skill to deal with both weak Conſciences, and deep deceitful hearts. 2. They muſt be truly fearing God, and of experience in this great work. For a Troubled ſoul is ſeldom well reſolved and comforted meerly out of a Book;

Book; but from the Book and Experience both together. Carnal or formal men will but make a Jeſt at the Doubts of a Troubled Chriſtian; or at leaſt will give you ſuch formal Remedies as will prove no Cure: Either they will perſwade you, as the Antinomians do, that you ſhould truſt God with your ſoul, and never Queſtion your Faith: Or that you do ill to trouble your ſelf about ſuch things: Or they will direct you onely to the Comforts of General Grace, and tell you onely that God is Merciful, and Chriſt dyed for ſinners: which are the neceſſary Foundations of our Peace; but will not anſwer particular Doubts of our own ſincerity and of our Intereſt in Chriſt: Or elſe they will make you believe that Holineſs of heart and life (which is the thing you look after) is it that troubleth you and breeds all your ſcruples: Or elſe with the Papiſts, they will ſend you to your Merits for Comfort; or to ſome Vindictive Penance in Faſtings, Pilgrimages, or the like; or to ſome Saint departed, or Angel, or to the Pardons or Indulgencies of the Pope: or to a certain, formal, carnal Devotion, to make God amends. 3. They muſt be men of downright Faithfulneſs, that will deal plainly and freely, though not cruelly: and not like thoſe tender Surgeons that will leave the Cure undone for fear of

hurting: Meddle not with men-pleasers and daubers, that will presently speak Comfort to you as Confidently as if they had known you twenty years, when perhaps they know little of your heart or Case. Deal not with such as resolve to humour you. 4. They must be men of fidelity, and well tryed to be such; that you may trust them with those secrets which you are called to Reveal. 5. They must be men of great stayedness and wisdom, that they may neither rashly pass their Judgement, nor set you upon unsound, unwarrantable or dangerous Courses. 6. It is suspicious if they be men that are so Impudent as to draw out your secrets, and screw themselves deeper into your privatest thoughts and ways then is meet: Yet a compassionate Minister, when he seeth that poor Christians do endanger themselves by keeping secret their Troubles, or else that they hazard themselves by hiding the greatest of their sins, like *Achan*, *Saul*, or *Ananias* and *Saphira*, and so play the Hypocrites; in these Cases he may and must urge them to deal openly. 7. Above all be sure that those that you seek advice of be sound in the Faith, and free from the two desperate plagues of notorious false doctrine, and separating dividing inclinations, that do but hunt about to make Disciples to themselves. There are two of the

the former sort, and three of the latter, that I would charge you to take heed of (and yet all is but four) 1. Among those that erre from the Faith (next to Pagans, Jews and Infidels, whether Ranters, Seekers or Socinians, which I think few sober godly men are so much in danger of, because of their extreme vileness) I would especially have you avoyd the Antinomians, being the greatest pretenders to the right comforting afflicted Consciences in the world: but upon my certain knowledge I dare say they are notorious subverters of the very nature of the Gospel, and that free Grace which they so much talk of, and the great dishonorers of the Lord Jesus, whom they seem so highly to extoll. They are those Mountebanks and Quacksalvers that delude the world by vain ostentation, and kill more then they well Cure. 2. Next to them, take heed of the Papists, who will go to *Rome*, to Saints, to Angels, to Merits, to the most carnal delusory means for Comfort, when they should go to Scripture and to Heaven for it.

And then take heed that you fall not into the hands of separating dividers of Christs Church. The most notorious and dangerous of them are of these three sorts: 1. The last mentioned, the Papists: They are the most notorious Schismaticks and Separatists that

ever Gods Church did know on Earth: For my part, I think their Schism is more dangerous and wicked then the rest of their false Doctrine. The unmerciful, proud, self-seeking wretches would like the Donatists make us believe that God hath no true Church on Earth but they: and that all the Christians in *Ethiopia*, *Asia*, *Germany*, *Hungary*, *France*, *England*, *Scotland*, *Ireland*, *Belgia*, and the rest of the World that acknowledge not their Pope of *Rome* to be Head of all the Churches in the World, are none of Christs Churches, nor ever were. Thus do they separate from all the Churches on Earth, and confine all Religion and Salvation to themselves, who so notoriously depart from Christs way of salvation. Indeed the extreme diligence that they use in visiting the sick, and soliciting all men to their Church and way, is plainly to get themselves followers; and they are everywhere more industrious to enlarge the Popes Kingdom, then Christs. So far are they from studying the Unity of the Catholick Church which they so much talk of, that they will admit none to be of that Church, nor to be saved, but their own party, as if indeed the Pope had the Keys of Heaven. Indeed they are the most impudent Sectaries and Schismaticks on Earth. 2. The next to them are the Anabaptists,

baptists, whose Doctrine is not in it self so dangerous as their Schism and gathering Disciples so zealously to themselves: And so strange a curse of God hath followed them hitherto, as may deter any sober Christian from rash adventuring on their way. Even now when they are higher in the world then ever they were on earth, yet do the judicious see Gods heavy judgement upon them, in their Congregations and Conversations. 3. Lastly, meddle not with those commonly called Separatists; for they will make a prey of you for the increase of their party. I do not mean that you should separate from these two last, as they do from us, and have nothing to do with them, nor acknowledge them Christians. But seek not their advice and make them not of your counsel. You will do as one that goes to a Physician that hath the plague, to be cured of a cut finger, if you go for your comfort to any of these Seducers. But if you have a Pastor that is found in the main Doctrines of Religion, and is studious of the Unity and Peace of the Church, such a man you may use, though in many things mistaken; for he will not seek to make a Prey of you by drawing you to his party. Let him be Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian, Episcopal, Independant, or Presbyterian, so he be found in the main, and free

from Diviſion. Thus I have ſhewed you the Qualifications of theſe men that you muſt ſeek advice of.

2. Let me next adde this: Let them be rather Paſtors then private men, if it may be: And rather your own Paſtor then others, if they are fit. For the firſt conſider, 1. It is their office to be Guides of Chriſts Diſciples under him, and to be ſpiritual Phyſicians for the curing of ſouls. And experience telleth us (and ſadly of late) what a curſe followeth thoſe that ſtep beyond the bounds of their calling by invading this office; and that God bleſſeth means to them that keep within his order, 1 *Theſſ.*5 12,13. *Heb.*13.7.17. Not but that private men may help you in this, as a private neighbour may give you a Medicine to cure your diſeaſe; but you will not ſo ſoon truſt them in any weighty caſe as you will the Phyſician. 2. Beſides Miniſters have made it the ſtudy of their lives, and therefore are liker to underſtand it then others. As for thoſe that think long ſtudy no more conducible to the knowledge of Scriptures, then if men ſtudied not at all, they may as well Renounce Reaſon, and diſpute for preheminency of beaſts above men, as renounce ſtudy which is but the uſe of Reaſon. But it appears how conſiderately theſe men ſpeak themſelves, and whence

whence it comes, and how much credit a ſober-Chriſtian ſhould give them! Let them read *Pſal.* 1.2,3. *Heb.*5. 11,12,13,14. 1 *Tim.* 4.13,14,15,16. and 2 *Tim.* 2. 15. and let them return to their wits. *Paul* commands *Timothy*, though he was from his youth acquainted with the Scriptures, *Meditate upon theſe things: Give thy ſelf Wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all*: How much need have we to do ſo now? 3. Alſo Miniſters are uſually moſt *experienced* in this work: And wiſdom requires you no more to truſt your ſoul then you would do your body with an unexperienced man.

2. And if it may be (he being fit) let it be rather your own Paſtor then another: 1 Becauſe it belongeth to his peculiar place and charge, to Direct the ſouls of his own Congregation. 2. Becauſe he is likelier to know you, and to fit his advice to your eſtate, as having better opportunity then others to be acquainted with your converſation.

5. Next conſider, in what manner you muſt open your Grief, if you would have Cure. 1. Do it as truly as you can. Make the matter neither better nor worſe then it is. Specially take heed of dealing like *Ananias*; pretending to open all (as he did to Give all) when you do but open ſome common infirmities, and hide all the moſt diſgraceful di-

ſtempers of your heart and ſins of your life. The Vomit of Confeſſion muſt work to the bottom and fetch up that hidden ſin, which is it that continueth your Calamity. Read Mr. *T. Hooker* in his *Souls Preparation*, concerning this Confeſſion; who ſhews you the danger of not going to the bottom.

2. You muſt not go to a Miniſter to be cured meerly by Good words, as Wizards do by charms; and ſo think that all is well when he hath ſpoken comfortably to you: But you muſt go for Directions for your own Practice, that ſo the cure may be done by leiſure when you come home. Truly moſt even of the godly that I have known, do go to a Miniſter for comfort, as ſilly people go to a Phyſician for Phyſick. If the Phyſician could ſtroak them whole, or give them a penny worth of ſome pleaſant ſtuff, that would cure all in an hour, then they would praiſe him. But alas, the cure will not be done 1. Without coſt. 2. Nor without time and patience. 3. Nor without taking down unpleaſing medicines; and ſo they let all alone. So you come to a Miniſter for advice and comfort; and you look that his words ſhould comfort you before he leaves you, or at leaſt, ſome ſhort ſmall direction to take home with you: But he tells you, if you will be cured you muſt more Reſolve againſt that diſquieting

disquieting Corruption and Passion; you must more meekly submit to Reproof: you must walk more watchfully and conscionably with God and men; and then you must not give ear to the Tempter, with many the like; he gives you, as I have done here, a bill of thirty several Directions, and tells you, you must practise all these. O this seems a tedious course; You are never the nearer comfort for Hearing these: it must be by long and diligent practising them. Is it not a foolish Patient that will come home from the Physitian, and say, *I have heard all that he said: but I am never the better?* So you say, *I have heard all that the Minister said, and I have never the more comfort.* But have you *Done* all that he bid you? and *Taken* all the Medicines that he gave you? Alas, the cure is most to be done by your self (under Christ) when you come home: The Minister is but the Physician to direct you what course to take for the cure. And then, as silly People run from one Physician to another, hearing what all can say, and desirous to know what every man thinks of them, but throughly follow the advice of none, but perhaps take one medicine from one man, and one from another, and let most even of those lie by them in the box, and so perish more certainly then if they never med-

led with any at all: so do most troubled souls, hear what one man saith, and what another saith, and seldom throughly follow the advice of any: but when one mans words do not cure them, they say, This is not the man that God hath appointed to cure me: And so another, and that is not the man: When they should rather say, *This is not the way*, then *This is not the man*: This lazy complaining is not it that will do the work; but faithful practising the Directions given you.

But I know some will say, *That it is near to Popish Auricular Confession which I here perswade Christians to, and it is to bring Christians under the Tyranny of the Priests again, and make Them acquainted with all mens secrets, and Masters of their Consciences.*

Answ. 1. To the last, I say, to the railing Devil of this age, no more but, *The Lord Rebuke thee.* If any Minister have wicked ends, let the God of heaven convert him, or root him out of his Church, and cast him among the weeds and bryers. But is it not the known voyce of Sensuality and Hell, to cast reproaches upon the way and ordinances of God? who knoweth not that it is the very Office of the Ministery, to be Teachers and Guides to men in matters of salvation? and

Over-

Overseers of them? and *that they watch for their souls, as those that must give an account?* and the people therefore bound to obey them? *Heb.* 13. 7, 17. should not the shepherd know his sheep, and their strayings and diseases? How else shall he cure them? should not the Physician hear the Patient open all his disease, yea study to discover to the utmost every thing he knows; and all little enough to the cure? A disease unknown is unlike to be cured: and a disease well known is half cured. Mr. *Tho. Hooker* saith truly, It is with many people as with some over-modest Patients, who having a disease in some secret place, they will not for shame reveal it to the Physician, till it be past cure, and then they must lose their lives by their modesty: So do many by their secret and more disgraceful sins. Not that every man is bound to open all his sins to his Pastor: but those that cannot well be otherwise cured, he must: either if the sense of the guilt cannot be removed, and true Assurance of pardon obtained: or else, if power against the sin be not otherwise obtained, but that it still prevaileth: In both these cases we must go to those that God hath made our Directors and Guids: I am confident many a thousand souls do long strive against Anger, Lust, Flesh-pleasing, Worldliness, and Trouble of

of Conſcience to little purpoſe, who if they would but have taken Gods way, and ſought out for help, and opened all their caſe to their Miniſter, they might have been delivered in a good meaſure long ago. 2. And for Popiſh confeſſion, I deteſt it: We would not perſwade men that there is a neceſſity of confeſſing every ſin to a Miniſter before it can be pardoned. Nor do we do it in a perplexed formality only at one time of the year: nor in order to Popiſh pardons, or Satisfactions: But we would have men go for Phyſick to their ſouls, as they do for their bodies; when they feel they have need; And let me adviſe all Chriſtian Congregations to practiſe this excellent duty more. See that you knock oftner at your Paſtors door, and ask his advice in all your preſſing neceſſities: Do not let him ſit quiet in his ſtudy for you: Make him know by experience that the tenth part of a Miniſters labor is not in the Pulpit. If your ſins are ſtrong, and you have wounded Conſcience deep, go for his advice for a ſafe cure: Many a mans ſore feſters to damnation for want of this: And poor ignorant and ſcandalous ſinners have far more need to do this then troubled Conſciences. I am confident, if the people of my Congregation did but do their duty for the good of their own ſouls in private ſeeking advice of

their

their Miniſters and opening their caſes to them, they would finde work for ten Miniſters at leaſt: And yet thoſe two that they have, have more work then they are able to do already. Eſpecially Miniſters in ſmall Countrey Congregations, might do abundance of Good this way: And their people are much too blame that they come not oftner to them for advice: This were the way to make Chriſtians indeed. The Devil knows this, and therefore ſo envies it, that he never did more againſt a deſign in the world: he hath got the Maintenance alienated that ſhould have maintained them, that ſo they may have but one Miniſter in a Congregation, and then among the greater Congregations this work is impoſſible for want of Inſtruments: yea he is about getting down the very Churches and ſettled Miniſtery, if God will ſuffer him. He ſetteth his Inſtruments to rail at Prieſts and Diſcipline, and to call Chriſts yoke Tyranny; becauſe while the Garden is hedged in, he is fain with envy to look over the hedge. What if a man (like thoſe of our times) ſhould come to a Town that have an Epidemical Pleuriſie or Feaver, and ſay, *Do not run like fools to theſe Phyſicians; they do but cheat you, and rob your purſes, and ſeek themſelves, and ſeek to be Lords of your lives.* Its poſſible ſome do ſo: But if by

theſe perſwaſions the filly people ſhould loſe their lives, how well had their new preacher befriended them? ſuch friends will thoſe prove at laſt to your ſouls, that diſſwade you from obeying the Guidance and Diſcipline of your Overſeers, and dare call the Ordinances of the Lord of Glory Tyrannical, and reproach thoſe that Chriſt hath ſet over them. *England* will not have Chriſt by his officers Rule over them; nor the ſeveral Congregations will not obey him. But he will make them know before many years are paſt, that they refuſed their own mercy; and knew not the things that belong to their Peace; and that he will be maſter at laſt in ſpight of Malice, and the proudeſt of his foes. If they get by this bargain of Refuſing Chriſts Government, and Deſpiſing his Miniſters, and making the Peace, Unity and Proſperity of his Church, and the ſouls of men, a Prey to their Proud miſguided Phanſies and Paſſions, then let them boaſt of the bargain, when they have tryed it. Only I would intreat one thing of them: Not to judge too confidently till they have ſeen the end.

And for all you tender Conſcienc'd Chriſtians, whom by the Miniſtry the Lord hath begotten or confirmed to himſelf, as ever you will ſhew your ſelves thankful, for ſo great

a mercy, as ever you will hold that you have got, or grow to more perfection, and attain that bleſſed Life to which Chriſt hath given you his Miniſters to conduct you, ſee that you ſtick cloſe to a judicious, godly, faithful Miniſtry; And make uſe of them while you have them. Have you ſtrong luſts? or deep wounds in conſcience, or a heavy burthen of doubtings or diſtreſs? ſeek their advice. God will have his own ordinance and officers have the chief inſtrumental hand in your cure. The ſame means oft times in another hand ſhall not do it. Yet I would have you make uſe of all able private Chriſtians help alſo.

I will tell you the reaſon why our Miniſters have not urged this ſo much upon you, nor ſo plainly acquainted their Congregations with the neceſſity of opening your caſe to your Miniſter, and ſeeking his advice.

1. Some in oppoſition to Popery have gone too far on the other extream; perhaps ſinning as deeply in neglect, as the Papiſts do in formal exceſs. It is a good ſign that an opinion is true, when it is near to errour. For truth is the very next ſtep to error. The ſmall thred of Truth, runs between the cloſe adjoyning extreams of errour.

2. Some Miniſters knowing the exceeding greatnes of the burthen, are loth to put themſelves

themselves upon it. This one Work of giving advice to all that ought to come and open their case to us, if our people did but what they ought do for their own safety, would it self in great Congregations, be more then preaching every day in the week. What then is all the rest of the work? And how can one man, yea or five, do this to five thousand souls? And then when it lieth undone, the malicious Reproachers rail at the Ministers, and accuse the people of unfitness to be Church-members; which howsoever there may be some cause of, yet not so much as they suggest; and that unfitness would best be cured by the diligence of more Labourers, which they think to cure by removing the few that do remain.

3. Also some Ministers seeing that they have more work then they can do already, think themselves uncapable of more, and therefore that its vain to put their people on it, to seek more.

4. Some Ministers are over-modest, and and think it to be unfit to desire people to open their secrets to them; in confessing their sins and corrupt inclinations, and opening their wants: And indeed, any ingenuous man will be backward to pry into the secrets of others. But when God hath made it our office under Christ to be Physicians to the

souls

ſouls of our People, it is but bloody cruelty to connive at their Pride and Carnal Baſhfulneſs, or Hypocritical Covering of their ſins, and to let them dye of their diſeaſe rather then we will urge them to diſcloſe it.

5. Some Miniſters are loth to tell People of their duty in this, leſt it ſhould confirm the world in their malicious conceit, that we would be Maſters of Mens Conſciences, and would lord it over them. This is as much folly and cruelty, as if the Maſter and Pilot of the Ship ſhould let the Mariners govern the Ship by the Major Vote, and run all on ſhelves, and drown themſelves and him, and all for fear of being thought Lordly and Tyrannical in taking the Government of the Ship upon himſelf, and telling the Mariners that it is their duty to obey him.

6. Moſt godly Miniſters do tell People in General of the Neceſſity of ſuch a Dependance on their Teachers, as Learners in the School of Chriſt ſhould have on them that are Uſhers under him the chief Maſter; and they do gladly give advice to thoſe that do ſeek to them: But they do not ſo particularly and plainly acquaint People with their duty in opening to them the particular ſores of their ſouls.

It is alſo the Policy of the Devil to make People Believe that their Miniſters are too ſtout,

ſtout, and will not ſtoop to a compaſſionate hearing of their caſe: eſpecially if Miniſters carry themſelves ſtrangely at too great a diſtance from their People. I would earneſtly intreat all Miniſters therefore to be as familiar and as much with their People as they can. Papiſts and other Seducers will inſinuate themſelves into their familiarity, if we be ſtrange: If you teach them not in their Houſes, theſe will Creep into their Houſes, and lead them Captive. I perſwade others of my Brethren to that which my ſelf am diſabled from performing; being by conſtant weakneſs (beſides unavoydable buſineſs) confined to my Chamber. But thoſe that can perform it, will find this a moſt neceſſary and profitable work. And let not poor People believe the Devil, who tels them that Miniſters are ſo proud, onely to diſcourage them from ſeeking their advice. Go try them once before you believe it.

Laſtly, Remember this, that it is not enough that you once opened your caſe to your Paſtour; but do it as often as Neceſſity urgeth you to call for his advice: though not on every light occaſion. Live in ſuch a Dependance on the advice and guidance of your Paſtour (under Chriſt) for your ſoul, as you do on the advice of the Phyſician for your body. Read *Mal.* 2. 7. and let Miniſters read 6, 8, 9.

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DIRECTION XXXII.

32. *As ever you would live in Peace and Comfort, and well-pleasing unto God, be sure that you understand and deeply consider wherein the height of a Christian life, and the greatest part of our Duty doth consist; To wit,* In a loving Delight in God, and a Thankful and Chearful Obedience to his Will: And then make this your Constant aim; and be still aspiring after it, and let all other affections and endeavours be subservient unto this.

THis one Rule well practised, would do wonders on the souls of poor Christians, in dispelling all their fears and troubles, and helping not onely to a setled Peace, but to live in the most comfortable state that can be expected upon earth. Write therefore these two or three words deep in your understandings and Memory; that the life which God

God is best pleased with, and we should be always endeavouring, is, *A Loving Delight in God through Christ; and a thankful and chearful obedience to him.* I do not say, that godly sorrows, and fears, and jealousies, are no Duties: but these are the great Duties, to which the rest should all subserve. Misapprehending the state of Duty and the very Nature of a Christian life must needs make sad distempers in mens hearts and conversations. Many Christians look upon Brokenheartedness, and much grieving and weeping for sin, as if it were the great thing that God Delighteth in and requireth of them: and therefore they bend all their endeavours this way; and are still striving with their hearts to break them more, and wringing their Consciences to squeez out some tears; and they think no Sermon, no Prayer, no Meditation speeds so well with them, as that which can help them to grieve or weep. I am far from perswading men against Humiliation & Godly sorrow and tenderness of heart: But yet I must tell you, that this is a sore errour that you lay so much upon it, and so much overlook that great and noble work and state to which it tendeth. Do you think that God hath any Pleasure in your sorrows as such? Doth it do him Good to see you dejected, afflicted and tormented? Alas, it is onely as your

your ſorrows do kill your ſins, and mortifie your fleſhly luſts, and prepare for your Peace and Joys, that God regards them: Becauſe God doth ſpeak comfortably to troubled drooping ſpirits, and tels them, that he delighteth in the contrite, and loveth the humble, and bindeth up the broken-hearted; therefore men miſ-underſtanding him, do think they ſhould do nothing but be ſtill breaking their own hearts: Whereas God ſpeaks it but partly to ſhew his hatred to the proud, and partly to ſhew his tender compaſſions to the humbled, that they might not be overwhelmed or deſpair. But, O Chriſtians, underſtand and conſider, that all your ſorrows are but preparatives to your joys: and that it is a higher and ſweeter work that God cals you to, and would have you ſpend your time and ſtrength in. 1. The firſt part of it is *Love*. A work that is wages to it ſelf. He that knows what it is to live in the Love of God, doth know that Chriſtianity is no tormenting and diſcontented life. 2. The next part is, *Delight in God, and in the Hopes and fore-thoughts of everlaſting Glory*. Pſal. 37.4. *Delight thy ſelf in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee the Deſires of thy heart*: This is it that you ſhould be bending your ſtudies and endeavours for, that your ſoul might be able to Delight it ſelf in God. 3. The third part is,

is Thankfulneſs and Praiſe? Though I ſay not as ſome, that we ſhould be moved by no fears or deſires of the Reward (that is, of God) but act only from Thankfulneſs (as though we had all that we expect already) yet let me deſire you to take ſpeciall notice of this Truth; that *Thankfulneſs muſt be the main principle of all Goſpel-Obedience*: And this is not onely true of the Regenerate after faith; but even the wicked themſelves who are called to Repent and Believe, are called to do it *in a glad and Thankful ſenſe of the mercy offered them in Chriſt*. All the world being fallen under Gods wrath and deſerved condemnation, and the Lord Jeſus having become a Sacrifice and Ranſom for all, and ſo brought all from that Legal Neceſſity of periſhing which they were under, the Goſpel which brings them the News of this, is glad tidings of great Joy to them; and the very juſtifying Act which they are called to, is, *Thankfully to Accept Chriſt as one that hath already ſatisfied for their ſins, and will ſave them, if they Accept him, and will follow his ſaving Counſel, and uſe his ſaving means*: and the ſaving work which they muſt proceed in, is *Thankfulneſs to obey that Redeemer whom they Believe in*. So that as General Redemption is the very Foundation of the new world and its Government, ſo Thankfulneſs for this Redemption

Redemption is the very life of Justifying faith, and Gospel obedience. And therefore the denyal of this universal Redemption (as to the Price and Satisfaction) doth both disable wicked men (if they receive it) from coming to Christ by true Justifying Faith (which is, The Thankful Acceptance of Christ as he is offered with his benefits;) and this Thankfulness must be for what he *hath done* in Dying for us, as well as for what he *will do* in pardoning and saving us; and it doth disable all true Believers from Gospel Grateful Obedience, when ever they lose the sight of their Evidences of special Grace (which, alas, how ordinary is it with them!) For when they cannot have special Grace in their eye to be Thankful for, according to this doctrine they must have none; because they can be no surer that Christ dyed for them, then they are that themselves are sincere Believers and truly sanctified. And when Thankfulness for Christs Death and Redemption ceaseth, Gospel obedience ceaseth, and Legal & slavish terrors do take place: Though the same cannot be said of Thankfulness for special renewing, pardoning Grace.

4. The fourth part of the Christian Life, is *Chearful Obedience*. God loveth a chearful Giver, and so he doth in every part of obedience, *Deut.*28.47. *Because thou servedst not the*

the Lord thy God with Joyfulneſs & with Gladneſs of heart for the abundance of all things, thou ſhalt ſerve thy enemies in hunger & thirſt, &c.

Will you now lay all this together, and make it for the time to come your buſineſs? and try whether whether it will not be the trueſt way to comfort? and make your life a bleſſed life? will you make it your end in hearing, reading, praying and meditation to raiſe your ſoul to Delight in God? Will you ſtrive as much to work it to this Delight as ever you did to work it to ſorrow? Certainly you have more reaſon? and certainly there is more matter of Delight in the face and Love of God, then in all the things in the world beſides. Conſider but the Scripture Commands, and then lay to heart your Duty, *Phil.*4.4. *Rejoyce in the Lord alway, and again I ſay Rejoyce. Phil.* 3.1. *Zech.* 10.7. *Joel* 2.23. *Iſa.*41.16. *Pſal* 33.1. *Rejoyce in the Lord O ye Righteous, for praiſe is comely for the upright.* Pſal. 97.12. 1 Theſſ. 5. 16. *Rejoyce evermore.* 1 Pet. 1.6,8, Rom.5.2. John 4.36. Pſal. 5.11. & 33.21. & 35.9. & 66.6. & 68.3,4. & 71.23. & 89.16. & 105.3. & 149.2. & 49.4. & 27.6. John 16.24. Rom. 15 13. and 14.17. *The Kingdom of God is in Righteouſneſs, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* Gal.5.22 Pſal. 32.11. *Be glad in the Lord and Rejoyce O ye Righteous, and ſhout for*

for joy all ye that are upright in heart. Psal. 132.9,16. & 5.11. & 35.27. Hab.3.18.with a hundred more the like. Have you made conscience of this great duty according to its excellency and these pressing Commands of God? Have you made Conscience of the Duties of Praise, Thanksgiving and Cheerful Obedience, as much as of Grieving for sin? Perhaps you will say, *I cannot do it for want of Assurance: If I knew that I were one of the Righteous, and upright in Heart, then I could be Glad and shout for Joy.* *Ans.* 1. I have before shewed you how you may know that; when you discover it in your self, see that you make more Conscience of this duty. 2. You have had Hopes aud Probabilites of your sincerity: Did you endeavor to answer those Probabilities in your Joys? 3. If you would but labour to get this Delight in God, it would help you to Assurance: for it would be one of your cleareſt evidences.

O how the subtil enemy disadvantageth the Gospel, by the misapprehensions and dejected spirits of Believers! It is the very Design of the ever-blessed God, to Glorifie Love and Mercy as highly in the Work of Redemption, as ever he Glorified Omnipotency in the Work of Creation: And he hath purposely unhindged the Sabboth which was appointed to Commemorate that work

of Power in Creation, to the first day of the week, *That it might be spent as a weekly day of Thanksgiving and Praise for the now more Glorious work of Redemption, that Love might not only be equally admired with power, but even go before it.* So that he hath laid the foundation of the Kingdom of Grace in Love and Mercy: and in Love and Mercy hath he framed the whole Structure of the Edifice: and Love and Mercy are written in legible indelible Characters upon every piece: And the whole frame of his Work and Temple-service, hath he so composed, that all might be the resounding Eccho's of Love; and the Praise and glorious Commemorations of Love and Mercy might be the great business of our solemn Assemblies: And the new Creation within us, and without us, is so ordered, that Love, Thankfulness and Delight, might be both the way and the end. And the Serpent who most opposeth God where he seeketh most Glory, especially the Glory of his Grace, doth labour so successfully to obscure this Glory, that he hath brought multitudes of poor Christians to have poor low thoughts of the Riches of this Grace: and to set every sin of theirs against it, which should but advance it: and ever to question the very foundation of the whole building, whether Christ hath Redeemed

deemed the World by his Sacrifice? yea he puts such a vail over the Glory of the Gospel, that men can hardly be brought to Receive it as Glad tidings, till they first have Assurance of their own Sanctification! And the very nature of Gods Kingdom is so unknown, that some men think it to be Unrighteousness and Libertinism, and others to be Pensive Dejections, and Tormenting Scruples and fears; and but few know it to be Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost: And the very business of a Christians life and Gods service is rather taken to be Scrupling, Quarrelling and Vexing our selves and the Church of God, then to be Love and Gratitude and a Delighting our souls in God and chearfully obeying him. And thus when Christianity seems a burdom and Torment: and the service of the world, the flesh and the Devil, seems the onely freedom, and quiet and delight, no wonder if the Devil have more unfeigned servants then Christ; and if men tremble at the name of Holiness, and fly away from Religion as a Mischief. What can be more contrary to its nature, and to Gods design in forming it, then for the Professors to live such dejected and dolorous lives? God calls men from Vexation and Vanity, to high Delights and Peace! And men come to

God as from Peace and Pleasure, to Vexation. All our preaching will do little to win souls from Sensuality to Holiness, while they look upon the sad lives of the Professors of Holiness; As it will more deter a sick man from medling with a Physician, to see all that he hath had in hand to lie languishing in continual pains to their death, then all his words and promises will encourage them. O what blessed lives might Gods people live, if they understood the love of God in the mysterie of mans Redemption; and did addict themselves to the consideration and improvement of it, and did believingly eye the promised Glory, and hereupon did make it the business of their lives, to Delight their souls in him that hath Loved them! And what a wonderful success might we expect to our Preaching, if the Holy Delights and Chearful Obedience of the Saints did preach as clearly to the eyes of the world, as we preach loudly to their ears?

But flesh will be flesh yet a while! and unbelief will be unbelief! we are all too blame! The Lord forgive our overlooking his Loving kindeness; and our dishonouring the Glorious Gospel of his Son; and our seconding Satan, in his contradicting of that Design which hath contrived Gods Glory in so sweet a way.

And

And now Christian Reader, let me intreat thee in the name and fear of God, hereafter better to understand and practise thy Duty. Thy heart is better a thousand times in Godly sorrow then in Carnal mirth (and by such sorrows it is often made better, *Eccles.*7.2, 3,4.) But never take it to be Right till it be Delighting it self in God. When you kneel down in prayer, labour so to conceive of God, and bespeak him that he may be your Delight: so do in Hearing and Reading: so do in all your Meditations of God: So do in your feasting on the flesh and blood of Christ at his Supper. Especially improve the happy opportunity of the Lords Day, wherein you may wholly devote your selves to this work. And I advise Ministers and all Christs Redeemed ones, that they spend more of those days in Praise and Thanksgiving, especially in Commemoration of the whole work of Redemption (and not of Christs Resurrection alone) or else they will not answer the Institution of the Lord: And that they keep it as the most solemn day of Thanksgiving, and be briefer on that day in their Confessions and Lamentations, and larger at other times! O that the Congregations of Christ through the world were so well informed and animated, that the main business of their solemn Assemblies on that

day might be to sound forth the high Praises of their Redeemer; and to begin here the Praises of God and the Lamb which they must perfect in Heaven, for ever! How sweet a foretaste of Heaven would be then in these solemnities! And truly, let me tell you, my Brethren of the Ministry, you should by private Teaching and week-day Sermons so further the knowledge of your People, that you might not need to spend so much of the Lords Day in Sermons as the most godly use to do; but might bestow a greater part of it in Psalms and solemn Praises to our Redeemer. And I could wish that the Ministers of *England* to that end would unanimously agree on some one Translation of the English Psalms in meeter, better then that in common use, and if it may be, better then any yet extant (not neglecting the poëtical sweetness under pretence of exact translating) or at least to agree on the best now extant: (the *London* Ministers may do well to lead the way) lest that blessed part of Gods solemn worship, should be blemished for want either of Reformation or Uniformity. And in my weak judgement, if Hymns and Psalms of Praise were new invented, as fit for the state of the Gospel-Church and Worship (to Laud the Redeemer come in the flesh, as expresly as the work of Grace is now ex-

pres).

preſs) as *Davids* Pſalms were fitted to the former ſtate and infancy of the Church, and more obſcure revelations of the Mediator and his Grace, it would be no ſinful humane Invention or addition; nor any more want warrant, then our Inventing the form and words of every Sermon that we preach, and every prayer that we make, or any Catechiſm or Confeſſion of faith: Nay it may ſeem of ſo great uſefulneſs, as to be next to a Neceſſity. (Still provided that we force not any to the uſe of them that through ignorance may ſcruple it.) And if there be any Convenient parcels of the Ancient Church that are fitted to this uſe, they ſhould deſervedly be preferred. I do not think I digreſs all this while from the ſcope of my Diſcourſe. For doubtleſs if Gods uſual ſolemn worſhip on the Lords Days were more fitted and directed to a Pleaſant, Delightful, Praiſing way, it would do very much to frame the ſpirits of Chriſtians to Joyfulneſs and Thankfulneſs and Delight in God: then which there is no greater cure for their Doubtful, Penſive, ſelf-tormenting frame. O try this, Chriſtians, at the requeſt of one that is moved by God to importune you to it! God doth pity you in your ſorrows! but he Delighteth in you when you Delight in him. See *Iſa.* 58.14. compared with *Zeph.* 3.17. And if ſin inter-

poſe and hinder your Delights, believe it, a Chearful Amendment and Obedience is that which will pleaſe God better then your ſelf-tormenting fears. Do not you like that ſervant better that will go chearfully about your work, and do it as well as he can, accounting it a Recreation, and will endeavour to mend where he hath done amiſs, then him that will at every ſtep fall a crying, *O I am ſo weak: I can do nothing as I ſhould.* An humble ſenſe of failings you will like; but not that your ſervant ſhould ſit ſtill and complain when he ſhould be working; nor that all your ſervice ſhould be performed with weeping, diſquietneſs and lamentations; You had rather have your ſervant humbly and modeſtly chearful, and not alway dejected, for fear of diſpleaſing you. O how many poor ſouls are overſeen in this! You might eaſily perceive it even by the Devils oppoſition and temptations! He will further you in your ſelf-vexations (when he cannot keep you in ſecurity and preſumption) but in amending he will hinder you with all his might. How oft have I known poor paſſionate Creatures, that would vex and rage in anger, and break out in unſeemly language, to the diſquieting of all about them; and others that would drop into other the like ſins, and when they have done, lament it, and condemn

demn themselves; and yet would not set upon a resolute and chearful Reformation! Nay, if you do but reprove them for any sin, they will sooner say, *If I be so bad, God will condemn me for an Hypocrite*; and so lye down in disquietness and distress; then they will say, *I see my sin, and I resolve to resist it, and I pray you warn me of it, and help me to watch against it.* So that they would bring us to this pass, that either we must let them alone with their sins for fear of Tormenting them, or else we must cause them to lye down in terrours. Alas, poor mistaken souls! It is neither of these that God cals for! Will you do any thing save what you should do? Must you needs be esteemed either Innocent, or Hypocrites, or such as shall be damned? The thing that God would have, is this; That you would be glad that you see your fault, and thank him that sheweth it you, and resolvedly do your best to amend it, and this in faith and chearful confidence in Christ, flying to his Spirit for help and victory. Will you please the Devil so far, and so far contradict the gracious way of Christ, as that you will needs either sin still, or Despair? Is there not a middle between these two? to wit, Chearful Amendment? Remember that it is not your Vexation or Despair, but your Obedience and Peace that God desireth

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That life is most Pleasing to him, which is most safe and sweet to you.

If you say still, You cannot Delight in God: I say again; *Do but acknowledge it the great Work that God requireth of you, and make it your daily aim, and care, and busines, and then you will more easily and certainly attain it.* But while you know not your work, or so far mistake it, as to think it consisteth more in sorrows and fears; and never endeavour in your Duties or Meditations to raise your soul to a Delight in God, but rather to cast down your self with still poaring on your miseries, no wonder then if you be a stranger to this life of holy Delight!

By this time I find my self come up to the subject of my Book of the *Saints Rest*; wherein having said so much to Direct and Excite you, for the attainment of these Spiritual and Heavenly Delights, I will referr you to it, for your help in that work; and adde no more here, but to Desire you through the course of your life to remember, That *the true Love of God in Christ, and Delight in him and Thankful, Chearful Obedience to him, is the great Work of a Christian, which God is best pleased with, and which the blessed Angels and Saints shall be exercised in for ever.*

And O thou the Blessed God of Love, the Father of Mercy, the Prince of Peace, the Spi-

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rit of Consolation, compose the Disquieted Spirits of thy People, and the tumultuous, disjoynted state of thy Churches; and pardon our Rashness, Contentions and Blood-guiltiness, and give us not up to the state of the Wicked, Who are like the raging Sea, and to whom there is no Peace! Lay thy command on our Winds and Waves, before thy shipwrackt vessel perish: And Rebuke that evil spirit whose name is Legion, which hath possessed so great a part of thine Inheritance: Send forth the spirit of Judgement and Meekness into thy Churches; and save us from our Pride and Ignorance with their effects: And bring our feet into the Way of Peace, which hitherto We have not known. O close all thy People speedily in loving consultations, and earnest enquiries after Peace. Let them Return from their Corruptions, Contentions and Divisions, and joyntly seek thee, asking the Way to Zion With their faces thitherward, saying, Come, let us joyn our selves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgotten: Blast all opposing Policies and Powers: Say to these Dead and Dry bones, Live. And out of these Ruines do thou yet erect a City of Righteousness, Where thy People may dwell together, in Peaceable habitations; and in the midst thereof, A Temple to thy Holiness: Let the materials of it be Verity and Purity: Let the Redeemer be its Foundation: Let

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Love and Peace cement it into Unity: Let thy Laver and Covenant be the Dores: and Holineſs to the Lord be engraved thereon; that buyers and ſellers may be caſt out, and the common and unclean may know their Place; and let no deſolating Abomination be there ſet up: But let thy People all in one name, in one faith, with one mind, and one ſoul, attend to thine Inſtructions, and wait for thy Laws, and ſubmit unto thine Order, and Rejoyce in thy Salvation: that the troubled ſpirits may be there exhilerated, the dark enlightned, and all may offer thee the ſacrifice of Praiſe (without diſ-affections, diſcords or diviſions:) that ſo thy People may be thy Delight, and thou mayſt be the chiefeſt Delight of thy People; that they may Pleaſe thee through him that hat, perfectly pleaſed thee. Or if our expectations of this Happineſs on earth be too high, yet give us ſo much as may enlighten our eyes, and heal thoſe corruptions which eſtrange us from thee, and may propagate thy Truth, increaſe thy Church, and honour thy Holineſs, and may quicken our deſires, and ſtrengthen us in our way, and be a fore-taſt to us of the Everlaſting Reſt.

Luk. 2. 14. Glory to God in the Higheſt, on earth Peace, Good will towards men.

Eccleſ. 12. 12, 13, 14. Of making many Books there is no end: and much ſtudy is a wearineſs to the fleſh. Let us hear the Concluſion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his Commandments: for this is the whole [Duty] of man, &c.

FINIS.